DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 442 937 CE 080 324

AUTHOR Falk, Ian, Ed.
TITLE Lifelong Learning: Literacy, Schooling and the Adult World. Literacy and Learning Series, No. 2. Adult Literacy Research Network.
INSTITUTION Language Australia, Melbourne (Victoria).
SPONS AGENCY Australian Dept. of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Canberra.
ISBN ISBN-1-875578-99-4
PUB DATE 1999-00-00
NOTE 164p.; For No. 1, see CE 079 696.
AVAILABLE FROM Language Australia, GPO Box 372F, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia, Tel: 61 3 9926 4794, Fax: 61 3 9926 4780, Email: davet@la.ames.vic.edu.au, Web site: http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/language-australia/aris ($25 Australian).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - General (020)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; Constructivism (Learning); *Cultural Literacy; Curriculum Development; Developed Nations; Educational Research; *Evaluation; Foreign Countries; Intercultural Communication; *Lifelong Learning; *Literacy Education; Numeracy; Outcomes of Education; Performance Based Assessment; Second Language Learning; Secondary Education; *Sex Differences; Technological Literacy
IDENTIFIERS *Australia; China

ABSTRACT

The 12 chapters in this second title in the series expose and explore the following significant issues underlying schooling and its intersection with the adult world outside of school: aspects of knowledge, gender, literacy across culture, and assessing what is learned in school and in the adult world. The chapters are: "Whose Knowledge Gets Constructed in the Learning Process?" (Claire Hiller, Hariklia Hearn-Kokkinos); "Best Practices in Year 2 Literacy Classes" (R. J. Braithwaite); "Negotiation in a Secondary English Curriculum: A Case Study in Curriculum Renewal" (Scott Johnston, Mike McCausland); "Boys and Literacy at Bronston High School" (Andrew Kowaluk); "Literacies Online: What's New?" (Angela Dudfield); "The Potted Pair: Rethinking the Heterosexual Pair as a Site for Liberatory Relationships" (Jacqui Martin); "Intercultural Literacy: A Developmental Model" (Mark Heyward); "Communicative Aims of Languages Other Than English (LOTE) Education: A Comparative Study in Australia and China" (Yuanfang Yu); "Assessment: The Question of Time" (Elizabeth Hodson); "The National Reporting System (NRS) in the Workplace" (Maree Watts, Robeka Smith); "Literacy, Numeracy, Self-Confidence and Values: Chickens, Eggs, and 'Access'" (Ian Falk, Sue Kilpatrick); and "Performance Assessment in Second Language Learning: Some Problems and Issues in the Adult Sector" (Fiona Cotton). (YLB)

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Lifelong learning: Literacy schooling and the adult world

edited by
Ian Falk

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LITERACY & LEARNING SERIES, NO2

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Lifelong learning: Literacy, schooling and the adult world

Edited by Ian Falk

Literacy and Learning Series, no. 2

Published by

LANGUAGE AUSTRALIA

Language Australia Ltd.

Lifelong learning: Literacy, schooling and the adult world

Ian H Falk (Editor)

Literacy and Learning Series, no. 2

Language Australia Pty Ltd

Lifelong learning: Literacy, schooling and the adult world

ISBN: 1 875578 99 4

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Published by Language Australia Ltd 1999

ALL enquiries in relation to this publication should be addressed to:
Publications and Clearinghouse Manager
Language Australia
GPO Box 372F
Melbourne VIC 3001

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Foreword

In *Lifelong learning: Literacy, schooling and the adult world,* the intention is to expose some of the variety of significant issues underlying schooling and its intersection with the adult world outside of school. These issues, echoed in the chapter titles, are aspects of *knowledge, gender,* literacy across *culture,* and the *assessment* of what is learned in school and the adult world. The research on which the chapters are based is varied in both its scope and nature. It is varied also in the content it describes, reflecting the variation and complexity of lifelong learning from schooling through to the adult world.

In the first book in this series, called *Literacy, adults and diversity,* there were eight contributions clustered around the theme of research as learning. At that time, James Gee, Jean Searle and I who conducted the Winter School from which the chapters evolved, were struck by the fact that in learning *about* language and literacy in their various fields of endeavour, the contributors were also learning *through* language and literacy. Moreover, the skills they acquired provided them with tools for the lifelong learning. This theme continues throughout this second book in our 'Literacy and Learning' series. Once again, the authors either research into language, literacy or numeracy, or they show what they learn about schooling, education and the adult world through their use of language, literacy and discourse to disclose their findings.

Lifelong learning: Literacy, schooling and the adult world has three Parts, and twelve chapters overall. In the twelve chapters, there is a richness of issues related to schooling and the adult world, blended with the sub-themes of knowledge, gender, culture and assessment.

Ian Falk
University of Tasmania at Launceston

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to all those who assisted in various ways with the preparation and production of this book. Suzanne Crowley worked behind the scenes to coordinate the chapter contributors and the flow of paperwork associated with that process. Margaret Falk expertly edited the chapters in the first stages of unification of style and appearance. Ida McCann worked hard on the later editorial stages, and Claire Hiller provided much needed and appreciated expertise, guidance and advice for much of the early days of the book's development.

A sincere thank you to the staff of the publisher, Language Australia Pty Ltd for their care and attention in turning the electronic and hard copy of the chapters into a book.

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Preface

This book has been prepared according to standard academic book publishing procedures. The individual chapters were initially edited and screened, and were returned to the authors for amendment as required. At this stage, some chapters submitted were rejected.

After initial revisions, all chapters were sent to two independent and blind reviewers, each located in geographically different universities, one from the adult literacy and numeracy field and one from the child literacy and language. Each of these reviewers commented in detail on all chapters, their individual integrity and the overlaps and coherence of the assembled work. These comments were returned via the Editor for authorial amendment once again. At this stage, once again, some chapters submitted were rejected.

My thanks go to the independent reviewers for their time and trouble in helping shape this book into a coherent whole, and a heartfelt thank you to the authors who submitted chapters but who, on this occasion, were not successful

Contributors

Scott Johnson teaches English and co-ordinates Literacy Programs at Riverside High School in Launceston, Tasmania. He has been closely involved in literacy and English curriculum developments in the state in the last fifteen years.

Mike McCausland teaches English curriculum at the University of Tasmania at Launceston.

Ian Falk is Director of the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, and Associate Professor at the University of Tasmania. His academic interests also include communication, discourse, adult learning, language and literacy. His particular sociological emphases lie in the relationships between discourse, knowledge and ideology. Ian has published papers and book chapters around these themes, as well as papers which examine the practical applications of a critical theoretical derivation for education, training and policy analysis.

Sue Kilpatrick is Associate Director of the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, and senior lecturer at the University of Tasmania. Her academic interests include the role of education and training in influencing changes to work practices, the link between education and training and small business profitability, and effective training delivery methods, especially for rural areas. She has recently completed a major report titled "Managing Farming: How farmers learn".

Claire Hiller is senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania. She is assistant head of the Bachelor of Teaching program with special interests in language, literacy, literature and gender.

Hariklia Hearn-Kokkinos is a teacher of English at a High School in Hobart. She has special interest in inclusive practices in teaching.

Mark Heyward was born and educated in Tasmania. He now resides with his wife in Indonesia where he is pursuing a career as educational administrator and consultant. Mark has a passion for education along with music and bush-walking. His research into intercultural literacy in a remote community in Kalimantan, Indonesia has provided the basis for a number of consultancy reports. It also fulfils Mark's personal need to understand the role of culture in shaping crosscultural, pluralist and global communities.

Elizabeth Hodson has worked in the area of migrant English for 26 years. During that time she served as teacher, Professional Development officer, Materials Development Coordinator and Teacher trainer. She continues in the area as presently designated Team Leader to the languages program within TAFE Tasmania. Ms. Hodson has continued to investigate matters related to the industry through academic studies throughout her career and has two Masters Degrees firstly in Humanities and Linguistics. She is presently enrolled in a PhD with the Tasmanian University studying Pragmatics as it related to management in the area of Education.

John Braithwaite is Professor and Head of the School of Early Childhood and Primary Education at the University of Tasmania. He, along with other members of the School, has been involved in ongoing investigations into literacy teaching practices in Tasmanian primary schools.

Maree Watts has worked in Adult Literacy for 10 years. Her current position as a Senior Program Coordinator with Adult Literacy and Basic Education in TAFE Tasmania requires her to assess the needs, plan pathways and delivery training to individuals from a wide range of backgrounds. She has a social science and special education teaching background, is passionate about enabling Adult Literacy students to access training and has extended her professional knowledge by completing a Masters of Education specialising in Adult Literacy theory and practice. Whilst completing her Masters of Education Maree undertook research projects on the power relationships in Adult Literacy assessment and measuring writing outcomes of Adult Literacy training. This background makes Maree ideally suited to examine the use of the NRS on a daily basis and its application to measuring accredited and non-accredited training outcomes.

Andrew Kowaluk is 40 years of age and has been with the Education Department since 1982. He currently teaches English and History at Huonville High School. This is a co-educational high school 38km south of Hobart. It has an enrolment of approximately 400 students from grade 7 to 10. As TIC of English and Grade coordinator in the senior school Andrew has become increasingly conscious of the problems encountered by boys at the high school, both in terms of their literacy learning, and in terms of socialisation and general conduct. This has led to an ongoing research project which was assisted with a grant from Language Australia. Andrew's interest in literacy led him enrolling in a PhD at the University of Tasmania where he is undertaking study into literacy in the information age.

Robeka Smith is employed part time as a Senior Program Coordinator with Workplace Learning Services in TAFE Tasmania. Workplace Learning Services Accesses WELL funding on behalf of enterprises to enable the integration of literacy and numeracy in everyday tasks in the workplace. This requires Robeka to map student progress to the NRS. As well Robeka works as a nationally based Industry Training with TexSkill Ltd where the focus in on textile specific training. Coming from a professional background in science where she was employed as a microbiologist, Robeka then moved into secondary teaching as a maths/science before becoming an Adult Literacy/Numeracy trainer. She is particularly interested in the literacy and numeracy skills required by production workers.

Jacqui Martin is a former teacher, who currently works as a Business Development Manager with the Tasmanian government. Jacqui's interest in language, literacy and gender began during her years in the classroom, teaching from early childhood to tertiary. She completed her Master of Education in 1997, during which time she was able to explore in detail the crucial role language plays in forming gender equity.

Angela Dudfield worked for five years as a lecturer in language and literacy at the University of Tasmania. She has recently taken up a senior research post at the Centre for Critical Psychology of the University of Western Sydney (Nepean), Australia, where she is managing a large research project titled "Children and Cyberspace". She can be reached by email at a.dudfield@uws.edu.au.

Yuanfang Yu is a lecturer in linguistics at a university in China. She is currently study-ing her PhD in Queensland, though her contribution to this book arose when she won a small grant at the University of Tasmania to analyse the Australia/China Languages Other Than English programmes.

Fiona Cotton worked as a teacher of English as a Second Language in Tasmania. She was successful in winning a small grant to investigate the topic of her chapter in this book.

Part

1

Literacy, knowledge and gender

Chapter
1

Whose knowledge gets constructed in the learning process?

Claire Hiller & Hariklia Hearn-Kokkinos

Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship between gender, attitudes to sexuality, pedagogy and the reading of two narrative texts in a classroom, *Peter* (Walker, 1991) and *Looking for Alibrandi* (Marchetta, 1992). It is co-authored by the teacher of a Grade 9 class in which the research took place and the researcher who acted as an observer in the classroom, participating when appropriate. The implications for the production of gender through pedagogical practices are explored in an attempt to empower both teachers and researchers to be critically self-reflective and to gain a deeper understanding of the English classroom (Lather 1991, p. 56). In order to explore the discourses endorsed by the pedagogical practices of the teacher, this chapter examines teacher/student discourses as reflected in four transcripts of teacher/student interaction. The aim is to explore whose knowledge is constructed in the learning processes.

About the research

A comprehensive high school in a suburb of Hobart is the site of the investigation because of the relationship between the researcher, Claire, and the teacher/researcher, Hariklia. Hariklia has considerable teaching experience and peer recognised expertise. She is active in professional development activities, cooperative teaching and research activities, subject association meetings and conferences. She is interested in researching the teaching of English and in gender issues and is committed to classroom research with a view to change. She is particularly interested in issues of inclusion. Hariklia and Claire planned the research, co-authored the work on pedagogical discourses, checked the transcripts and participated in the analysis through discussion. They have a long and valued association through their collaborative work on gender and through postgraduate studies.

The research was conducted in one of Hariklia's English classes, a Grade 9, in which narrative texts were taught. The class in which the transcripts were collected consisted of twenty-six students: thirteen girls and thirteen boys. Most of the students were fourteen or fifteen when the data was collected. The majority of the students in this class were of Anglo-Saxon background. They were of mixed social background. Some were from the local housing department area, while others were from a rural background. In this class there was only one male student with a European background and no-one identified as Aboriginal.

The 1990s are days of backlash: 'the political power of the distinction between sex and gender has been largely made to disappear' (Oakley 1997, p. 52) and gender in the curriculum has been rendered almost invisible. A recent Australian report *Gender and School Education* (Collins et al. 1996) which analysed the success of Australia's policy on the education of girls has revealed that very little progress has been made in the areas which were given special attention. One of its strong suggestions is that 'the big challenge for schools in relation to boys is to support them to dismantle the walls they construct around themselves and others in order to feel safely masculine' (et al. p. 176) and that 'the alternative may be that many boys continue to redraw boundaries in ways that are constricting of their own development as well as restricting, hurtful and dangerous for other boys and girls' (p. 177). This suggests that it is just as important now to interrogate current and powerful discourses of gender in order to make visible how they limit opportunities for both girls and boys and to open spaces for the rewriting of the possibilities of gender.

Format of the research presentation

The contesting voices of those involved in the research are presented in a format that encourages interrogation by the reader. Transcripts which demonstrate the voices of the students and the teacher, the narrative of the teacher and the comments of the researcher are juxtaposed on the page. The narrative of the teacher appears on the left of the page; on the right is the after consideration running commentary of the researcher that moves between personal comment and academic analysis. This is an attempt by the researcher and the teacher to enable the different voices to play against each other in a way which is ultimately empowering to all those concerned. The students have the least powerful voice in that they are not included in the co-authoring of the chapter.

The format of the text is intended to fold backwards and forwards, weaving a method from story, transcript, interpretation, data and analysis all embedded in a narrative. The juxtaposition is intended to provoke the reader to produce a multiplicity of readings and to challenge the readings of the narrative itself. Possible interpretations are not limited to those of the teacher and the researcher: one purpose of the multiple texts is to allow readers to construct multiple layers of meaning which question singularity and certainty of meaning.

Transcript 1

Teacher	What if it's your brother or sister who was gay?
Girl 1	It wouldn't be a problem. It would be exactly the same person that you had grown up with. They would only not have a wife or husband only in the other way. Would you care?
Boy 1	At first you might be a bit worried but after a while it would not matter.
Boy 2	I would beat him up but he's a bit big. I would like to beat him up.
Boy 3	Yes, I would beat him up and if it made no difference I would beat him up again.
Teacher	So you think violence is a way of solving the problem?
Boy 3	Yes.

Teacher	Am I right in thinking that if I were a lesbian you would think it OK to be violent against me? Say you would throw stones at my house?
Boy 3	Yes, that's right
Teacher	Even if it is my sexual preference that did not interfere with anyone else?
Boy 3	Yes.
Teacher	Well thank you Grade 9. We will leave it there for today.

Multi-layered intertexts

Hariklia: In planning this research with Claire I did not feel constrained in my pedagogy. I realised that in the past I had been embedded in a Cultural Heritage pedagogical model but that it no longer worked. Traditional pedagogies which impose authoritative meaning are narrow, stifling and produced by one person, usually the teacher. It was my intention to allow the students to respond freely to the text. The work took place in a classroom referred to as the dungeon. Beyond the walls of the dungeon a fierce and intense controversy still rages among some groups of the community about homosexuality.

Within the boundaries of the dungeon, we, Hariklia, Claire and a Grade 9 class, read, discuss and explore Kate Walker's text *Peter*. It is very carefully constructed. It is suggestive, sensitive and exploratory. Outside our walls, homosexuality is still contested vigorously. All students who read *Peter,* sense subtleties. Some are open and respectful of difference, which is often collapsed into sameness. All students respond to the read text. No one is unresponsive – including me.

On this day, my intention was to stimulate replies which are open, direct and thought-provoking. It seems imperative that students feel safe enough to express their ideas without fear. Sexuality is a complex issue. Traditionally, it is a taboo subject. Therefore, it becomes integral to begin with the prior knowledge of the students themselves, and to minimise the self consciousness usually attributed to adolescence and which issues of sexuality raise. It may be that students can empathise. It may be that some of the students within the dungeon become gay, lesbian, or heterosexuals.

Perhaps naively, I anticipated a more generous and exploratory generation of understanding(s). Yet, embedded as I am in the Personal Growth Model, I have by virtue of its perimeters stiflingly narrowed my teaching, paralysing both our own subjectivities and a multiplicity of meaning.

Claire: This text is part of a transcript collected in a Secondary English classroom by a teacher, Hariklia, and myself as researcher when the teacher and students were in the process of reading the narrative text *Peter*. (Walker 1991) In terms of pedagogy and student response this extract from the transcript demonstrates the central concerns of this chapter which seeks to explore the role of pedagogy in providing discursive spaces for students in response to narrative texts in one English classroom. This brief extract is a textual record of an exchange between teacher and students, a complex exchange which can be read in a number of ways.

Many of the students did not respond, which is an acceptable aspect of a Personal Response Discourse in that nobody needs to feel that a response is compulsory. There were few teaching strategies employed to ensure that all students were engaged or that all students responded verbally to the text. They were expected to do so in the compulsory journal writing. A Personal Response Discourse gives the appearance of inclusion and equity yet endorses silence and sees it as unproblematic and without need of critique and analysis. Further, because the discourse does not allow for interrogation of the personal responses, the responses of most students were unchallenged. Thus responses that closed possibilities for inclusion and equity were implicitly endorsed.

Students with tentative readings, oppositional readings or minority readings have little voice in a classroom where the Personal Response Discourse is the dominant one. This is partly because of the jostling in the classroom for the right to speak and partly because the discourse requires that students disclose personal aspects of themselves which is difficult for some students.

Transcript 2

Teacher	I have written on the board, 'Mrs Smith is a lesbian'.
Girl 1	She can't be.
Girl 2	She's got children.
Girl 3	She's got a husband.
Boy 1	I don't care.
Teacher	Are you saying that it doesn't matter?
Boy 1	No, I'm just saying I don't care. *(Displays contempt.)*
Teacher	Are you saying that it does not matter how much respect you have other people what their sexuality is?
Girl 1	I do not think it makes any difference what you are.
Teacher	So you would apply this to one as well?
Girl 2	Yes, I do not think it makes any difference.
Teacher	Well thank you Grade 9. We will leave it there for today.

Multi-layered intertexts

Hariklia: It was my current intention to try to open up discursive spaces for my Grade 9 class. The choice of pedagogy is now even more vital for me. Claire was still very careful to ensure that my role as teacher was not suppressed. I am still, however, embedded in the dominant and widely used pedagogy of Personal Response because one of its cardinal tenets is valuing the responses of the child. My expectations are that this approach will enhance and encourage personal responses from the students.

If gender were to be placed on a continuum with heightened masculinity and femininity at either end of the spectrum, then some of the boys in the previous transcript tended to cling to the masculine extremity. Violent and authoritative ways of being appear acceptable. Reflecting, they may have felt very threatened and peculiarly unsafe by a sense of masculinity which did not depend upon a heterosexual meaning.

Since one of my aims became one of opening up and exploring difference in a way which would lessen a sense of danger, Claire and I conferred prior to the class on a simple strategy. She agreed to be presented as a lesbian.

We soon discovered that the students' sense of Claire was far too great to make the possibility work. In quick succession, the girls colour her in. It becomes evident also, that the girls do want to be involved in ideas of difference in ways which most boys do not. It seems likely that my attempts to lessen feelings of danger are inadvertently magnifying his/theirs. The boy displays a palpable contempt for female sexual possibilities. To the extent that we are all making meanings and understandings of, and about, the world, I am saddened by the narrowness of exploration and my inability to shift it.

Claire: This extract from the transcripts demonstrates the role of the researcher in the ethnographic collection of the data. The 'Mrs Smith' referred to by the teacher is the researcher, who was asked by the teacher if she minded being named in this way on the board. This act represented the trust and the reciprocity which existed between teacher and researcher. The researcher did not interfere with the pedagogical practices of the teacher and agreed to the suggestion. The teacher's intention was to try to open up interpretations of difference for the students. At this stage the students were accustomed to the presence of the researcher and had gained knowledge about her life and her background. Occasionally they asked her questions and included her in their conversations.

The responses of the three girls show their recognition of the researcher in the class and the ways in which they had begun to construct her. She is not anonymous observer but a part of the classroom life. For the boys it was an issue that they did not care about, wish to discuss or were contemptuous of. This extract also demonstrates the gendered nature of student responses, the girls with limited understandings of possible female positions but willing to accept what they term as 'difference', the boys resisting engagement.

Transcript 3

Teacher	What does Josephine look like?
Boy 1	A chickie babe. It's the girl on the front cover.
Girl 1	It can't be the girl on the cover. This one has green eyes.
Girl 2	She is dark, brown eyes, olive skin, brown curly hair, she wears glasses.
Teacher	Is she the girl on the front cover?
Girl 3	You do not have green eyes if you are Italian.
Boy 1	I will feel really deceived if it is not the girl on the cover.

Multi-layered intertexts

Hariklia: It was my intention to open up a range of discursive spaces for the class. I want the students to interrogate the narrative text and to investigate the character, Josephine. The character Josephine is not Anglo-Saxon. She is Italian. The question I asked is designed to instigate responses to the character's appearance which is evident in the narrative text. I assume, mistakenly, that the students will most likely draw on the writer's construction of character. The students, however, see the characters as real and my pedagogy does little to shift this. The impetus for my second question is to reposition the reading of the boy. The description, 'A chickie babe', is very stereotyped. It reveals a 'wog girl' category of female. It is also a lost moment, in that I do not ask the boy what he means by the patronising 'chickie babe'.

Tellingly, Boy 1 does not want to shift his reading. He is so certain that the girl on the front cover is Josephine, despite Girl 1 and Girl 2's accurate summing of Josephine as dark eyed, dark haired, olive skinned, and a wearer of glasses. There is no way Boy 1 will willingly abandon his idealised version of Josephine. He is discomforted by the disturbance of his reading of the world. Definite in his view of the world, he does not wish it to be betrayed.

No girls, in comparison, display blurred distinctions in the relationship between reality as reflected and narrative texts. There is a greater willingness to explore and postulate difference. Yet the girls too see the characters as representations of reality and not as constructions of the text. I struggle, I strive, I contest the tensions among the pedagogies, the dominant student responses and my own subjectivity, wondering what to do next.

Claire: This extract from the transcripts illustrates what happens when the taken-for-granted reality of the students' lived experience and the taken-for-granted reality of the narrative text are disrupted. This is an important moment in the movement towards the elaboration of an alternative pedagogy; one which makes strange those discursive constructions of narrative texts which see them as reflecting essentialist truths about what it is to be human. The boy, who is sure that the character Josephine in *Looking for*

Alibrandi (Marchetta 1992) is the girl on the front cover of the book, has both the deceptive nature of representation and of assumed social realities estranged and disrupted. One question from the teacher repositions him towards the text. The comments from the girls refer to textual information which point out difference. For him the relationship of an assumed reality and a narrative text is so blurred that a process of estrangement, which implies discomfort, works to reposition his interpretation of himself and his assumed reality.

None of the girls articulated the belief of an assumed direct mimetic relationship between the narrative texts and reality. This episode is at the core of the central arguments of this research as it illustrates the gendered positioning in engagement with narrative texts. It sees the male using the text to detect reality, to confirm positions towards the text and to the world and to resist questions or interpretations which do not accord with his own. It sees the female as empathetic towards the male, speculative towards the text and reflective about textual interpretations. The pedagogical questions reposition readers to the text and demonstrates the links between pedagogy and discursive positioning

Transcript 4

Teacher	Why did Mrs Minslow cut like she did?
Boy 1	She thought they were gay.
Boy 2	She assumed automatically that something was going on.
Girl 1	She thought David might have been influencing Peter because she knows David is gay.
Girl 2	Is David gay?
Girl 1	No, there is nothing wrong with holding someone of the same sex.
Teacher	If it was two girls hugging what would she do?
Girl 4	It would not matter.
Girl 1	If she had not known David was gay she might not have worried.
Teacher	Interesting. *(Pause)*
Teacher	Why did Peter wish that David was nasty to him?
Girl 4	So he would not be attracted to him.
Teacher	Might be. What might happen? What might Mrs Minslow do?
Girl 4	She might think David is trying to take advantage of Peter.
Teacher	Do you think she might think Peter is gay?
Girl 1	No, because he is too young.
Teacher	Let's stop. Two different reactions. Great! Two different reactions!

Multi-layered intertexts

Hariklia: My entire purpose in this sequence is to personalise a contentious issue and to encourage students to empathise with other possibilities of living and being. Knowing that homosexuality is deeply problematic for many, it seems this non-threatening approach could be a way of opening up the debate. Both Girl 1 and Boy 1 are able to propose that it is acceptable to be different. However, many are not.

Perceiving that it is awkward for many students to verbalise their responses, I opt for a compulsory writing unit. Based on previous experience with this model I believed that many students might write down what they might not necessarily be prepared to say. They did not.

During this episode, I am still grounded in the Personal Response Model. Constrained by the need to allow students to discover, enjoy and value different responses equally, I acknowledge that the consequences of this model's restraints led me to reassert gendered readings of the text(s).

Though all dialogues take place within the walls of the dungeon, I am seriously beginning to question a practice which does not allow for greater openness, and the generating of multiple readings and meanings. One of my sisters is lesbian. I am deeply horrified by the intolerant aggression and repulsive violence as a means of resolving difference, repeatedly advocated by so many boys. The legitimacy given to the beatings, even of their own brothers dutifully to their deaths, resounds and shatters any gossamer thread of assurance. This leads me to phrase and rephrase many times, questions which will tap into emphatic, more sensitive and more generous responses. Of itself, this does not work.

Potential constraints surface. Some parents/people question the teaching of the text, *Peter*. It is a critical social act that I am not asked to stop teaching it by the administration. Later, at an English conference, it is confirmed that Claire and I are the only two at the conference who touch this text, despite its sexual inexplicitness. How do I incorporate a Critical Literacy pedagogy which both opens discursive spaces for both teacher and students and at the same time interrogates power relations and the construction of masculinity and femininity.

The walls of the dungeon do not keep out the reproduction of inequality.

Claire: The teacher was firmly located in the Personal Response Pedagogical Discourse. She considered that enjoyment of the text and uninterrogated responses were the most important aspects of teaching narrative texts and was concerned that a questioning of the ideologies encoded by the text or an insistence on providing dominant readings would interfere with the potential enjoyment to be gained. Yet there is implied criticism of the students' responses in her questions and statements but they occur within a Personal Response Pedagogical Discourse which frames and supports different responses.

She stated that it was much more important that the students enjoyed their experience of narrative texts through the encouragement of personal response than to stultify enjoyment by too much explicit teaching of narrative theories, literary terms, and processes of analysis, which would destroy the work for the students. While she used the term 'critical literacy' and acknowledged that Critical Literacy had implications for what is taught and how it is taught, the multiplicity she referred to emerged as a variety of personal responses rather than a critical interrogation of the texts which resulted in a range of competing meanings. For instance, in the transcripts there was evidence that she tried to encourage multiplicity.

She allowed multiple or divergent readings but because of her location in the discourse of personal growth the variety of student meanings remained mostly intact and uncontested. Where divergent meanings were contested by students it was the dominant student meaning which seemed to prevail.

The teacher did not position herself to interfere in this negotiation of meaning and implicitly endorsed the dominant student reading even when she did not endorse the meaning herself. Therefore there was no opportunity to discuss how meanings were constructed or locate grounds on which readings might be defended or challenged. The students were not encouraged to consider how they might be positioned by the texts nor did they discuss what sets of attitudes and values were privileged by particular readings of a text.

The Personal Response Discourse of the teaching of narrative texts can result in the maintenance of already existing different positions for females and males. Although this was not the teacher's stated purpose – in fact it was the opposite – the dominant pedagogical discourse encouraged the students to adopt the feminine and masculine positions within which they were already embedded. Competing discourses were not questioned. The texts and the teaching of the texts positioned females and males differently and unequally, reproducing the inequality at work in the school and society at large.

Discussion

A Critical Literacy Pedagogical Discourse can open spaces for students if it provides a language of critical thinking; a language which enables them to deconstruct, if only partially, their own subjectivities and subject positions. Yet, according to Luke (1993) it is important for any language of critique to have legitimacy beyond the classroom. Teachers can encourage critical classroom debate in a context which legitimates personal voice. The language of critique is not necessarily personal. This causes a tension between the so-called legitimate student voice and the language of critique. There are difficulties with the encouragement of students to reveal the personal for the scrutiny of those who have power over them. A further difficulty which has been identified by Luke (1993) is that the personal disclosures are seen to be authentic and unavailable for interrogation and critique regardless of the discourses of race, class and gender, which might inform subject positions. The privileging of personal experience over critique denies 'its situatedness in discourses that constitute subjectivities' (Luke 1993, p. 37). The emphasis on the personal which is central to critical literacy links with the privileging of personal response in the teaching of narrative texts at the expense of a consideration of the discursive contexts in which such personal response is encouraged.

Little will change for students unless the power structures of the classroom are challenged. Both teachers and students are implicated in the discursive networks of the classroom and located within institutionalised gender and power relations (Luke 1993, p. 37). It is these discursive contexts which need to be examined through a critical literacy of both critique and agency.

> *Equal opportunity to speak in the classroom, like equal representation in imagery and language in curricular text, will do little to challenge the outer limits of the epistemological horizon where the masculinist logic of the universal subject and its naming of the other is firmly inscribed* (Luke 1993, p. 37).

Luke (1993) suggests a critical literacy which recognises multiplicity and difference while affirming values which are placed in historical, political and cultural contexts.

For both girls and boys the examination of the construction of the texts in which they are implicated has the potential for opening new spaces for the students to take up. In the classroom the texts which operate are mostly invisible '...the historic and culture specific techniques and texts of the social institution of the school constitute the act and the practice of narrating' (Luke 1993, p. 147).

Classroom talk constructs story as a language game 'with definitive and appropriate cultural logic' (Luke 1993, p. 147). But it is a logic which is largely invisible to both students and teachers. Its invisibility does not detract from its power. The stories are so entrenched in the power which operates in the construction and reproduction of the narratives that they are rarely questioned. In the interaction of the classroom discourse and the texts read in the classroom the inequities are maintained, '...the rationale and site for building a text are both invisible and non-negotiable' (Luke 1993 p. 150). To unravel the strands of the narratives operating would go a long way toward unravelling the other powerful discourses, including the pedagogical purposes of the teachers, which are operating in the English classroom.

Pedagogy is concerned with the construction of knowledge. The problem is whose knowledge is being constructed, by whom and for what and whose purposes. An alternative discourse which seeks to address some of the discursive gaps of a Critical Literacy Pedagogical Discourse is about 'making strange' to enable teachers and students to examine the construction of knowledge. In contemporary educational practice in schools there is much resistance to discussions of pedagogy. The teacher in this research, Hariklia, is an exception to such teacher resistance.

A Critical Pedagogy of Estrangement aims to encourage sharper understandings of masculinity and femininity especially as they impact on the teaching of narrative texts in the classroom. It works through pedagogical positioning rather than providing a set of teaching practices. Current discourses of masculinity and femininity do not advantage either boys or girls in their engagement with narrative texts. Existing pedagogies do not take sufficient account of the gendered construction of the students, have not attempted to engage with the gendered subjectivities that students bring with them nor have they sufficiently critically reflected on the ways in which pedagogy conflicts with social constructions of gender.

A Critical Pedagogy of Estrangement – one which makes visible to both teachers and students how power operates to privilege certain kinds of texts, both those produced and those consumed – is empowering. One of the aims of such a pedagogy is to examine the binaries that currently exist in the teaching of English and attempt to reconfigure them. Currently many teachers and students accept dominant meanings without question. For example, in accepting that narrative texts reproduce a world that is assumed to be real, both students and teachers reproduce dominant meanings of texts. The unequal relations reproduced in a romance text like *Looking for Alibrandi* (Marchetta 1992) are accepted as real and 'true' and the way things are. These dominant meanings freely circulate in ways which excludes teachers and students from the generation of resistant readings.

The discourses taken up by the majority of the boys are more likely to be associated with objectivity, rationality, denial of emotions and resistance; while the discourses more likely to be taken up by the girls are associated with emotions, acceptance of diversity and complicity. A Critical Pedagogy of Estrangement can make visible the constructedness of the discursive positions taken up by both boys and girls and can contribute to the remaking of subject English and the role of narrative texts in it. Using processes connected with a Critical Literacy Pedagogical discourse a Critical Pedagogy of Estrangement asks questions which situate the students and teachers differently towards texts, sees that texts can be read differently depending on the purposes for reading them and that meanings are multiple depending on the contexts in which they are made.

Conclusion

Processes of estrangement expose the complex ways cultural values are encoded in reading and writing and make them visible for discussion. Such processes recognise the difficulty of discarding the gendered discourses in which the students are embedded. For example, most of the students bring gendered responses to the selection of narrative texts and gendered patterns of response learned through engagement with popular cultural texts and socially produced and accepted ways of talking about narrative texts. An empathetic response, which was the dominant response of the girls in this study, is very difficult to question and to shift. Processes of estrangement will be generative and produce alternative subject positionings for students, so that the girls might see that it is possible to see gender as discursively produced in a narrative text and limiting to women while at the same time engaging empathically with the characters.

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Chapter
2

Best practices in Year 2 literacy classes

R. J. Braithwaite
School of Early Childhood & Primary Education
University of Tasmania

Introduction

The heightened focus on literacy outcomes in Australian schools has focused greater attention on the classroom practices of teachers. This report presents data from a study involving 31 Year 2 classes across Tasmania. It focuses on answering the following research question:

> *What are the practices evident in classes displaying best literacy outcomes?*

Based on the findings of the study a series of recommendations are presented for teachers and schools to consider when planning their literacy programs.

Community concerns about literacy outcomes in schools have increased in recent years. Driven by fears that these outcomes may not be keeping pace with the accelerating rate of global economic, social, cultural and technological transformation taking place in the world today, governments have focused their policy initiatives towards improving student literacy outcomes. Consequently all Australian educational systems have responded by reviewing and revising literacy curriculum documents and resources provided to schools.

This focus on improved literacy outcomes has arisen because of considerable changes in the competencies required to function effectively in society. Freebody and Welch (1993 p. 3) have pointed out that the requisite literacy outcomes for effective civil, social and cultural functioning have increased and diversified. At the same time the increased competitiveness of the labour market and/or the decline in workforce numbers of low literacy occupations in our society have led to an increase in the necessary formal credentials for employment. In order to keep pace with these social and labour market changes the Australian National Literacy Policy (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1991, p. 8) states that:

> *Australian literacy standards will have to be sustained for most learners and dramatically improved for many, to enable effective participation in the vastly more competitive environment which will be a characteristic of the world in the early part of next century.*

At the individual level, literacy is seen as being fundamental to formal and informal education and training as it is the key to a person's general level of educational achievement in school and beyond (McGaw, Long, Morgan & Rosier 1989).

The bottom line for students progressing through our educational systems now and in future years is that our society will demand increasingly higher standards of literacy of all students. Crévola and Hill (1997, p. 1) argue that:

> *Despite the best efforts of teachers, a significant proportion of students continue to fail to achieve success in early literacy at school, with severe consequences for their subsequent educational progress, career opportunities and life chances. The extent of the problem varies from system to system and from school to school. Within the Australian context, Hill & Russell (1994) have suggested that a conservative estimate... would lead to the conclusion that some 10 to 15 per cent of Australian children in the compulsory years have literacy skills below the minimum level deemed to be adequate for their Year level; and some 5 to 10 per cent more have some difficulties in literacy which need attention if their school work is not to be hampered to some extent. For some schools, failure rates range between 20 to 50 per cent.*

The problem is a matter of concern to all educators and a number of solutions have been proposed, particularly in early childhood education, where literacy is a key learning area.

Literacy in early childhood

Early childhood teachers are required to develop all students' literacy outcomes to ensure that students get a strong foundation on which to build future learning. Research (Wells 1986; Cambourne 1988) has clearly demonstrated that success in literacy learning in the first years of school is a key factor in student literacy achievement throughout schooling. In the Commonwealth Government's national literacy policy statement, the then Minister for Education, John Dawkins reinforced this point stating:

> *Evidence suggests that if children are not making appropriate literacy progress by the end of the third year of primary school, it is likely that they may not make up the gap through the rest of their years of schooling ...We must clarify and refine our literacy goals and implement the best available teaching methods to support them* (DEET 1991, p. 5).

Such calls have been reinforced by the energetic advocacy of the current Commonwealth Minister for Education Dr Kemp who stated recently in Washington DC that: '(a) key focus (is)on the achievement of minimum standards by all students in basic skills such as literacy and numeracy in schools (1999)'. With such a heightened political agenda running there has been greater attention devoted to the delivery of literacy programs at the early childhood level with increased resourcing of programs by Commonwealth and State governments.

Tasmanian initiatives

New literacy initiatives have been developed in all states to improve the quality of literacy teaching in the early years of school, and these state initiatives have seen the provision of extra human and physical resources in early childhood classes.

In 1993 the Tasmanian Department of Education, Community and Cultural Development (DECCD) published the Key Intended Literacy Outcomes (KILOs) to guide teachers' literacy planning and implementation, and, in 1994, established the Early Literacy Support Program for early childhood classes. This program supported a team approach to literacy teaching in Preparatory classes, the first year of formal schooling. The additional literacy resource teachers provided under the program worked alongside existing classroom teachers in Preparatory classes to develop students' literacy skills.

This program was extended to include Year 2 students in 1996 'after the success and cost effective benefits of the Preparatory program' were established.

'Best practices' in early childhood classes

Most of the programs that have been implemented by educational authorities to promote successful literacy outcomes have provided general and/or specific guidance to teachers about best practice in literacy teaching within early childhood classes. Any review of these suggestions reveals a multitude of different prescriptions about the 'best' way to structure teaching/learning strategies for students. In perhaps no other area of the curriculum is there so much debate about 'what works' (Lesiak 1997).

At the extremes of a literacy continuum are the views of those who believe that a formal, structured set of learning experiences should be presented to students using directed teaching strategies. Structured worksheets occupy a lot of the students' time in such classes. At the other end of the continuum would be those advocates who believe that literacy development is best encouraged by matching the teaching to the students' learning needs, an emphasis on the students' ongoing development. In the latter case there may be no curriculum framework to guide the teacher in the planning of literacy teaching.

In spite of the views proposed by the various advocates there is a general consensus about the structures and processes that are found in good literacy learning situations. The Tasmanian DECCD has published advice to teachers in Learning to Read & Write (1992) to guide the planning of their literacy teaching/learning. It is claimed by educational authorities such as DECCD that when teachers heed the advice contained in this publication and marry it with suggestions from other sources such as First Steps (Western Australian Education Department 1996) and the findings of researchers such as Marie Clay (1993), it is possible to build up a picture of classes that promote best practice in literacy teaching. Their teaching will be further enhanced when it is based on a well-developed understanding of the theories of language and literacy acquisition.

Such authorities also assert that when classes build on and actively encourage the involvement of parents in their children's literacy learning, provide a rich tapestry of literacy resources that are attractive and motivating to students, and develop and tailor teaching/learning practices to the individual needs of students and when these practices are coupled with an expectation set on the teacher's part that all students can make progress, given specific support and time, then quality literacy programs can be delivered. Accompanying such an approach is the necessity to maintain and use a detailed, systematic monitoring of the students' progress. And probably most important of all, quality literacy teaching occurs when the teacher provides adequate time for the teaching of literacy that allows for the delivery of a consistent and sustained program.

Given the idealised version of best practice reviewed above it was considered to be a worthwhile exercise to try to identify general literacy practices in Year 2 classes and to determine which classes generated effective literacy outcomes. By so doing it was hoped to provide guidance to teachers as to the practices that empirically have been shown to produce worthwhile literacy outcomes. Hence, the purpose of the study follows.

Purpose of the study

Specifically, the following report addresses the question ' What are the practices evident in Year 2 classes displaying best literacy outcomes?'. For the purposes of this study, 'best Year 2 literacy outcomes' refers to those classes adding value to the students' literacy outcomes above those that could reasonably be predicted on a series of literacy outcome tasks. The classes that displayed significantly higher literacy outcomes than predicted are described in the following discussion as 'most effective', while those classes that underperformed in this area are described as 'least effective'.

How we did it

Student outcomes, teacher interviews and classroom observational data were collected from a sample of 31 Year 2 classes in schools across the state. These data came from teachers, students and school executives over the period from February 1996 to April 1997. The schools in the sample were representative of Tasmanian schools and were situated in both urban and rural areas. Some schools were classified by DECCD as disadvantaged schools. The class grouping practices in the schools included straight Year 2 classes as well as combined Year 1/2 and Year 2/3 classes. Table 1 details the number of schools in each of the sample categories. One Year 2 class, or composite Year 2 class, from each school was the focus of this study.

Table 1: Sample details

Categories of schools	**Number of schools**
Size of school:	
Large (> 400)	10
Medium (> 200 < 400)	13
Small (< 200)	8
Geographical location:	
Urban	25
Rural (> 40 k from CBD*)	6
Educational Needs Indices**	
Disadvantaged	8
Not disadvantaged	23
Grouping practices of Year 2 classes	
Year 2	12
Year 1 – 2	9
Year 2 – 3	10

* Based on DETCCD data **based on DETCCD indices

Student literacy baseline data were collected at the beginning of Year 2, and outcome data were collected from the same students, at the beginning of Year 3. The baseline data were used to predict student literacy outcomes at the beginning of Year 3. These data were derived from the following tasks:
reading;

- a cloze task;
- a dictation task; and
- a production task.

In addition, comprehensive observational data were collected about student behaviours in the literacy classes and the teachers' implementation of the Year 2 Literacy program. These were complemented by extensive interviews with teachers to determine their constructions of literacy and the processes they followed in planning and implementing their programs[1]. Where schools had developed school-wide literacy policies these were analysed and compared with the teachers' own individual planning to see the extent to which the two complemented each other.

Nature of the literacy assessment tasks

Four assessment tasks were developed to gather data about young children's literacy development in this project. They included a running record of reading; a cloze passage; a dictation task; and a production task. The assessment tasks used in the project to gather data about young children's literacy learning were designed to identify how young children understand and use written language as a resource for making meaning and the extent of control that they have developed over this resource. Specifically, these tasks provide 'windows' into how children make sense of and with written language. In addition, the tasks provide some evidence of the children's control over the conventions of writing; namely spelling, punctuation and grammatical correctness.

In and of themselves, the assessment tasks used in this project have credibility as strategies for assessing and/or diagnosing literacy learning (see Clay 1993; Freebody & Austin, in Derewianka 1992; and Kemp 1987). While they do not reveal the rich data that are available through 'close observation of (authentic) language activities in a variety of different contexts' (Rivalland, in Derewianka 1992 p. 19), they do provide strong indications of whether children see sense-making as a central issue in their reading and writing, and of the kinds and range of strategies that children employ to make sense in and through written texts. In Clay's running record of reading, for example, the focus is on mapping the child's attention to and perception of print as a resource for making meaning (see Clay, 1993). Similarly, a cloze passage constitutes a tool for identifying the kind of information a child uses to make meaning from print (see Freebody & Austin, in Derewianka 1992). In the analysis of a sample of a child's writing, both content or meaning and structure or syntax can be assessed, as and where one realises or finds expression in the other (see Rothery, in Derewianka 1992).

There were significant correlations (> .715): among the students' performances on three of the baseline literacy tasks running record, cloze and dictation[2]. Because of the qualitative aspects of the production task it was not considered appropriate to correlate baseline data from these tasks with the other outcomes data.

Teacher interviews

Teachers of the Year 2 students who undertook the literacy assessment tasks were interviewed to discover their constructions of literacy. Specifically the interview questions probed the following issues concerning the teaching of literacy:

- teachers' philosophical beliefs about literacy and the teaching of literacy;
- teaching methodologies used by the teachers in their classes;
- planning strategies used by teachers for their literacy teaching/learning lessons;
- resources used by teachers in their literacy teaching;
- evaluation approaches used by teachers in their literacy teaching/learning lessons; and
- teachers' perceptions about the implementation of the Year 2 Early Literacy Support Program.

As the interview data represent teachers' self-reporting the question of the validity of the responses they make in the interview situation arises. While there is a body of literature that suggests that teachers' construction of their teaching practices by and large represents valid descriptions of their practice, there is a need to validate their responses. This was done by the collection of observational data about the teachers' classroom practices, and comparing what they claim they do in the interview data with their observed behaviours in the classes.

Classroom observations

The observation schedule was developed to collect data that portrayed the behaviours of students during literacy learning sessions. Actual observational data were supplemented by a classroom environment profile which recorded resources, seating patterns etc. in the classes. As well, short descriptive statements were compiled about teacher behaviours and the general climate in the classes. Observations were followed by brief follow-up interviews with the classroom teachers regarding the primary aims for their lessons. These data enabled an environmental profile of each Year 2 class in the study sample to be established.

The observation schedule included four components: observations of student behaviour in the literacy classroom; teacher behaviour in the literacy classes; classroom environment details; and the general climate in the classes.

Observational data of student behaviours identified a number of variables including where the student was in the classroom, who the student was interacting with and the intended task the student was undertaking. Coupled with this information was a list of the materials being used by the student. Another variable considered was student and adult talk. The amount, purpose and audience of observed talk were recorded. Two other overall perceptions were also recorded: student attentiveness to their tasks and the general ambience or affect while doing the literacy task.

While the predominant focus was on the observed student behaviours during the observational periods, records were also kept of the teachers' predominant activities during the observational periods.

Classroom environment details recorded included a rating of the classroom's physical environment in terms of an exemplary literacy learning environment identified in First Steps (W.A. Ed. Dept 1996, p. 7). The classroom environment itinerary used was an adaptation of a checklist included in First Steps. The checklist of physical layout and resources comprises a list of questions designed for classroom teachers to consider when evaluating their literacy learning environment.

The fourth component, general classroom climate, was a subjective rating of the affect in the classroom perceived by the observer. Essentially this represented whether the observer perceived the classes to be positive, comfortable working environments for students or whether they were perceived to be dysfunctional environments .

It was argued above that the observational data provide a reliable and valid 'snapshot' of student behaviours during the literacy lessons and provided sufficient contextual information in which to ground the collected data.

What did we find?

Space precludes describing in full the statistical processes used to identify the 'best' and the 'least' effective classes[3]. Using student gain scores on the outcome measures, regression analyses identified the 'best' and 'least' effective classes. It is the comparisons between these two groups of classes that form the bases of the following presentation of results and discussion.

Teaching practices evident in successful literacy learning classes

It is important at this stage to make the following point quite strongly. In portraying teachers' opinions and classroom practices it is necessary to avoid crude prescriptions about teaching approaches. The labels used to categorise the two groups of classes are very problematic. What is ' good' in teaching practice has been shown by research to be inappropriate in a different context (Berliner 1994). Further, what is 'good' or 'bad' in literacy teaching practices may not be applicable in other areas. However we are heartened by the conclusions of Cooper and McIntyre (1996) in a recent study whose conclusions support many of the findings presented in the following sections. And to reinforce the point further they draw attention to the interrelationship between the affective and cognitive dimensions of teaching and learning with data about the latter not being collected in this study. Cooper and McIntyre state:

> *It is important to intertwine affective and cognitive dimensions of teaching and learning. When teachers were explicit about this they revealed the high degree of skill and sophistication necessary for effective management of pupils and learning. Of particular importance here were consistent references to the need to create a positive social climate in the classroom, and the need for teaching approaches and learning tasks to be consistent with this endeavour* (1996 , p. 158)

This dimension is explored in this study but must be kept in mind when considering the following analyses.

Comparing the 'most effective' and the 'least effective' was purposefully done in order to discover whether there were clearly established trends in the data that could be used to inform teachers' literacy practices. There is no attempt to suggest that if teachers view literacy the way that the teachers in the most effective classes did that the teachers will transform all classes into the most effective practice classroom. Teaching is not that simple a task. Rather it is believed that teachers may wish to consider the evidence that is presented and determine what aspects of it may be adopted in their classes.

As is the case with a considerable amount of educational research the findings do not always portray stark differences. The differences are at times subtle and the effects generated by these differences work interactively in most classes. The findings do not portray recipes for action. They indicate ideas and processes that teachers may wish to consider in their literacy teaching.

Comparing teachers' views about literacy teaching

The views of the teachers in the most effective classes were compared with those of their peers in the least effective classes. The following presentation analyses teachers' views about literacy teaching obtained during the interviews. It is assumed by the author that the views about literacy teaching held by teachers will influence and shape their literacy planning, teaching and evaluation practices.

The first comparison examined background variables concerning experience and pre-service education. The teachers in the most effective classes were very experienced in terms of years of teaching and were slightly more experienced than the teachers in the least effective classes, though this difference was not significant. However, there was a significant difference between the most effective teachers and the least effective in terms of initial specialisation in their pre-service teacher education. The former were all trained as early childhood teachers compared with the other group who were mainly trained as primary teachers.

Analysing the views of the two groups about literacy teaching and their perceptions of the processes to be followed in teaching literacy revealed significant differences between the two groups.

Compared with their peers in the other group, literacy teachers in the 'best' classes:

- expressed clear and cohesive views about the meaning of the term 'literacy' compared with a diverse range of views espoused by the other group of teachers. The teachers in the most effective classes mirrored the views proposed in the National Curriculum Statements and Profiles. The other teachers frequently used terms such as 'all encompassing' and 'communication' when describing what they meant by the term literacy and were not as precise in their elaborations;

- favoured classroom literacy practices that had a whole language approach reinforced by the use of skill based teaching in areas such as phonics. Teachers in the other group repeatedly stressed the need to have an eclectic approach to literacy teaching but could not always articulate what that meant;
- justified their approach to teaching literacy on the grounds that it 'works' compared with the other group of teachers who stated that the eclectic approach enabled them to cater for the needs of a wide range of students in their classes;
- claimed that their strengths in literacy teaching lay in their enthusiasm to deliver their programs whereas the other group of teachers cited their experience as teachers as the reason for their perceived success;
- believed that they had to consolidate their students' literacy skills whereas the other group of teachers claimed they had to broaden their students' abilities;
- believed in grouping students with similar abilities in their classes compared with the other teachers who grouped students on their perceived similar interests;
- were more pro-active when it came to planning for parental involvement in their literacy programs while the other groups of teachers were more likely to 'let it happen';
- used checklists more to record students' progress whereas the other group of teachers relied more on anecdotal recording of students' progress;
- were more likely to plan specific meetings with parents to report student progress than the other group of teachers who relied more on incidental meetings;
- were more likely to evaluate their teaching on a continuous basis than the other group of teachers who stated that they evaluated their work when things were not working.
- stated clearer understanding of the objectives of the Year 2 literacy program than the other teachers who held varying views about its objectives;
- claimed that they worked together as a team to plan their teaching for the Early Literacy Support Program while the other group of teachers were more likely to work independently in their planning;
- claimed that they worked together in the same classroom more frequently in delivering the Early Literacy Support Program than was the case with the other group of teachers; and
- were more likely to state that they felt comfortable working with another teacher in the classroom than was the situation with the other group of teachers.

The factors on which that the two groups of teachers held similar views covered the following:

- the necessity to focus on the individual needs of students;
- their concern about their inability to keep up with changing trends in literacy teaching;
- the need to extend the above average student and to encourage their development of independent research skills;
- their reliance on teachers' resource books for their ideas;
- their positive opinions about the value of the KILOs; and
- the number of interruptions they get in their lessons.

Based on an examination of the above statements, it may be said that the teachers in the most effective classes were more certain about their approaches to literacy teaching, were more likely to plan and evaluate more systematically and pro-actively sought to involve parents in their literacy programs.

The next section examines the observational data to determine if there was similar differentiation between the two groups in these data.

Comparing the observational data in the two groups of classes

The observational data enabled comparisons to be made of the student behaviours in the two groups of classes. These data are presented in two parts: the first describes the literacy environments and the second the student behaviours as they worked under the guidance of their teachers or other adults. While there were individual differences to be found in the classroom environments and the student behaviours in each of the classes, there was sufficient commonality to be able to draw out generalised pictures of the two groups of classes.

i) Classroom environments

While it may be argued that the environments of any two classes are different, there are commonalities present in most classrooms. So in trying to present aspects of classroom environments that are present in the most effective classes compared with other classes the comparisons are not as clear- cut as in the interview data.

It should be said at this stage that all of the classes appeared to be effective literacy environments with only a few items distinguishing between the two groups of classes. The analyses of the significant differences between the classroom environments suggested that the most effective classes had:

- more general literacy resources available for students;
- more quality children's fiction available;
- a wider range of texts available for students;
- more displays about print conventions than was the case in the other classes; and
- students' texts displayed around the room more frequently.

On all of the other areas in which classroom data were collected there were no differences between the two groups of classes.

ii) Student behaviours

Examining the location of students in the classes revealed some interesting patterns. The students in the most effective classes were more likely to be at their desks working on their set tasks than was the case in the other classes. In the latter, more students were observed wandering around the classes than was the situation in the other classes. Both groups of students spent the same amount of time in groups on the floor under the direct control of the teachers. However, students in the most effective classes spent significantly more time (33%) in small groups with a teacher than was the case in the other groups of classes (9%). During these interactions the teachers were discussing or questioning the students' work and monitoring students' task behaviour.

iii) Literacy tasks set by teachers

The student tasks set by teachers in their classes gives some indication of the teachers' anticipated outcomes. The teachers in the most effective classes set significantly more independent tasks for their students than the teachers in the least effective classes.

Students in the former classes engaged in independent writing tasks, both formal and creative, significantly more frequently (69%) than the other students (53%).

There were fewer off-task behaviours (0%) observed of students in the most effective classes compared with students in the other classes (18%).

One of the surprising findings from this comparison was that students in the least effective classes illustrated less obvious enjoyment as they went about their tasks than students in the most effective classes.

One of the clear differences between the two groups of students was the amount of observed time the students engaged in worksheet activities. Students in the least effective classes were observed to spend three times as much time on worksheet type activities (25%) than was the case in the other group of students. Conversely students in the most effective classes were observed to spend about a third of their time reading for information compared with 13% of the students in the least effective classrooms.

When spelling activities were observed, students in the most effective classes spent significantly more time in whole class activities than the students in the other classes. The latter group of students spent significantly more time working on their personal dictionaries or working on their personal spelling journals than was the case in the other classes. Students in the most effective classes wrote in their own exercise books more frequently than students in the other classes. In the latter case these students usually wrote on loose sheets of paper.

Clear differences were apparent in the amount and type of student and adult talk in the two groups of classes. Students in the most effective classes spent 77% of the time they were observed to be talking, talking with their peers compared with 66% of the time in the other classes. The observational instrument did not collect data indicating the quality of the student talk in the classes.

Significant differences between the two groups in the amount of adult talk were observed. In the most effective classes the teacher talked for 93% of the time compared with 70% of the time for the teacher in the other classes. The majority of the adult talk in the most effective classes was spent discussing issues with students (36%) and modelling appropriate outcomes (11%). In the other group of classes the predominant adult talk observed involved the teacher explaining something (35%) to students and questioning (35%) their students.

In conclusion

It is clear from the above that significant differences existed between the guiding philosophies and practices of teachers in the 'most effective' and the 'least effective' classes and that there were significant differences in literacy outcomes for the students in the two groups of classes. However, it is not possible to say that the different views and practices produced the differential student outcomes. Rather we can say with some certainty that teachers should consider the views and practices identified in this study as a way of benchmarking their own practices: no more no less. Such self-reflection is an important practice for all teachers to engage in and it is hoped that the above findings provide further food for thought.

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1 Full details about these tasks may be found in Braithwaite, R. J., Andrew, R., Iles, M., Harbon, L. and Partridge, J.1997, Literacy Processes and Student Outcomes in Year 2 Classes, Launceston: Department of Early Childhood & Primary Education, University of Tasmania.

2 See Braithwaite et al., for details.

3 See Braithwaite et al., for details.

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Chapter

3

Negotiation in a Secondary English Curriculum: A case study in curriculum renewal

Scott Johnston & Mike McCausland

Introduction

Negotiating the curriculum as an international movement catering for student diversity and the empowerment of learners is one of the potentially profound educational changes of our time. In Tasmania its importance has been recognised in various ways in Education Department support documents and, more specifically, as an essential part of all senior English syllabuses. As a result it has become a principal 'site of contestation' where traditional and innovative views of English curriculum have clashed. There are at least two ways of looking at the impact of the 'negotiating the curriculum' movement in Tasmania. On the one hand it has given those teachers who support it the opportunity to provide a more collaborative learning environment and to encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning. Alternatively, for those teachers who oppose its radical agenda of redistributing power relations in the classroom, it has become a new orthodoxy whose demands are met by a limited change in teaching procedures. It may be mandated by the syllabus, but has its spirit really been transformed into pedagogic practice? This chapter reports on an enquiry into the use of negotiation in Tasmanian secondary English classrooms (Grades 9 – 12) that attempts to chart what impact it has made and whether it is indeed an instance of successful and effective curriculum renewal.

Background

From the late 1970s to the mid 1980s a social constructivist perspective of learning, the language across the curriculum movement and ideals of democracy and equity saw negotiation as a pedagogical idea gain increasing circulation, highlighted by the publication of Garth Boomer's *Negotiating the Curriculum* (1982) and a range of Commonwealth-funded Participation and Equity (PEP) projects in various states. In Tasmania, teams of teachers undertook two action-research projects documented in *The Bridge to Them* (Education Department of Tasmania, (1985) and *Negotiated Learning Experiences in the Classroom* (Education Department of Tasmania, (1986). The teachers were confident reflective practitioners attracted to the idea (and practice) of negotiation by a range of pedagogical motives including increasing student motivation and better managing group work. They were conscious that negotiation was a big step which could mean significant shifts in power within their classrooms. Their definition of negotiation – 'a conversation with students about content, method and assessment ... when all views have been shared, agreement is reached on ways to proceed' (Educ. Depart Tas. 1985, p. 7) – shows negotiation to be a practical straightforward process with implications for the way classrooms, programs and schools are organised. One of these teachers comments: 'there is nothing stunning or new about using the community as a resource but there is, to me, something new about trusting a bunch of badly behaved "slow learners" to take responsibility for their own learning' (Educ. Depart Tas. 1985, p. 40). Another remarks: 'it is the method itself, the process of putting children in control of what and how they learn, which engenders the interest and enthusiasm' (Educ. Depart. Tas. 1986, p. 11); and another: 'whatever the theories may say about negotiated learning it is its practicality that I like; basically it works in the classroom and that is the most important benefit as far as I am concerned' (Educ. Dept. Tas. 1986, p. 79).

These teachers and their classes came to develop (and tentatively to articulate) their own theories of learning and curriculum. Becoming 'full partners in the process of learning' (Educ. Dept. Tas. 1985, p. 68), the teachers were faced 'with a well of enthusiasm which bubbled its way out of the classroom into other parts of the school' (Educ. Dept Tas. 1986, p. 87). They found, as did Jon Cook and his colleagues (Boomer et al. 1992, pp. 16 – 18), that learners learn best when they are *engaged*, when they are supported through collaboration with peers and teachers to *explore*, and when they have the opportunity to *reflect* on their learning, to stand back from it and assess what and how they have learned. Engagement, exploration and reflection form the basis for the negotiation process. In negotiating the curriculum, 'the purposes and intentions of the learners are of central importance, but they must be integrated with the constraints under which the teacher and the institution operate' (Boomer et al., 1992, p. 184).

The subsequent Tasmanian educational context featured a Department-initiated process referred to as 'Secondary Renewal' which focused upon curriculum development, teaching and learning, student welfare and assessment practices, and a Schools Board-led introduction of criterion-based assessment in senior secondary syllabuses. At this time, too, the Department produced a policy document, *Secondary Education: the Future* (1987), which identified a series of *competencies* (acquiring information, conveying information, applying logical processes, undertaking practical tasks as an individual, undertaking practical tasks as a member of a group, making judgements, working creatively and solving problems) and *characteristics* (acting autonomously, acting responsibly, showing care and concern for other people, being concerned about values and beliefs). To achieve these competencies and characteristics the policy document recommended negotiating the curriculum as both a set of principles about teaching and learning and as classroom practice. To those involved with the writing of the new English syllabuses, a number of whom had participated in the action-research projects on negotiation, this recommendation confirmed that the time was ripe to introduce this innovatory approach to other English teachers.

The writing party responsible for the new Grade 9 syllabuses decided to give prominence to negotiation in their description of teaching methodology for the syllabuses. They recommended 'the adoption of a workshop approach in which cooperative learning and negotiated activities are features of the classroom ... teachers and students cooperate in planning ways of working and methods of evaluation.' Such a statement about particular strategies, though couched as *the syllabus suggests...*, was a notable inclusion and amounted to a pro-active, officially-sponsored move to modify the culture of English classrooms around the state. Additionally the most demanding of the three Year 9 syllabuses went a step further and established, as a work requirement with a dedicated assessment criterion, a negotiated unit of work originally called 'the Project'. This name has since been changed to avoid the worst excesses of the cut, paste and colour-in time-filling often associated with poorly conceived and organised school projects; although given various titles now, the most common is the 'Negotiated Study'. Both measures were significant departures from the dominant practices derived from previous Schools Board syllabuses, and when the writing party began constructing the set of Year 10 syllabuses, a further step was taken with the addition of three key learning processes which sat alongside language processes as valued ways of working. The Key Learning Processes identified were Negotiation, Reflection and Collaboration; although not directly stated and elaborated in all syllabuses, there was the expectation that all courses derived from Years 9 – 12 (TCE Tasmanian Certificate of Education) syllabuses would employ and value these underpinning key learning processes. This meant that negotiation was mandated not only in Departmental schools, but in Catholic and Independent schools as well.

These changes to the methodologies that teachers and students were expected to employ in English classrooms strongly signposted a new paradigm for the teaching of English in Tasmanian secondary schools and colleges. Classroom teachers responded in many ways. Some were as committed and enthusiastic as those who had participated in the action-research projects; some were cautiously willing to give it a go; and others saw negotiation in particular as untenable, unworkable and an abdication of a teacher's duties and responsibilities to teach. The tensions evidenced by such a range of opinions led to a heightened focus on teaching, classroom management, subject content and assessment procedures. The Education Department and the Tasmanian Association for the Teaching of English mounted energetic professional development programs for classroom teachers to examine negotiation and to become more comfortable about including it within classroom practice.

Effectively the enthusiasm of the action-researchers led to negotiation becoming an institutionally preferred, valued and mandated practice. These original groups of beginning negotiators moved more and more to an understanding of negotiation as a theoretical and political curriculum construct, as a strategy for questioning the way things are and the way things are done. They easily identified with the social constructivist views of learning and knowing espoused in the syllabuses, and understood that 'it is not a matter of whether or not to negotiate ... the dance between teacher and taught represents a continuing negotiation of meaning' (Boomer et al. 1992, p. 279). Such an orientation to curriculum was at odds with the idea of negotiation as a mandated set of procedures and practices, no matter how soundly based and well-meant such institutionalising was. Indeed, as Boomer warned: 'negotiating the curriculum must never become an "it". "Itness" in education is the hardening of the categories which precedes death' (1992, p. 91). This is what some of the original action researchers feared would happen. To them the 'work required' status of the Negotiated Study could well lead to some teachers losing sight of the principles in favour of a diminished and counter-productive focus on procedure and performance. The key issues debated in regard to negotiation in this context were whether it was fulfilling the claims made for it by those who introduced it, and whether its spirit had survived the process of becoming an orthodoxy.

About the study

To gather information on the role and status of negotiation in senior English a decade after the heady days of *The Bridge to Them*, we constructed two questionnaires that enquired into its success or otherwise as perceived by both proponents and opponents of the changes in the syllabus. One questionnaire surveyed student attitudes to the Negotiated Study (NS); it asked them to circle which statements best described their opinion about their recently completed study, then provided room for them to explain why. It focused on whether they liked choosing their own topic, if they were pleased with their achievement, if they put more or less work into it than usual, if they thought their work was of a higher standard than usual or not, whether negotiation with the teacher helped or otherwise, what they found most difficult in it, what were best and worst things about doing the study, and it allowed space for a general comment. The other questionnaire asked the teachers of these same students what they saw as the main advantages and disadvantages of the NS, what the term 'negotiated learning' meant for them, what their attitude to negotiated learning was now and how it had changed since they were introduced to the concept, and how they employed negotiated learning other than in the NS. We selected for the survey nineteen schools in northern and southern Tasmania to give representation to Catholic, Independent and State sectors, including city high schools, country high and district high schools and senior secondary colleges. All schools accepted the invitation to participate, and the survey was administered by teachers to their classes in Term 2, 1995. There were responses from 47 classes, all mixed sex, totalling 932 students; 30 teachers wrote responses. The survey instrument is summarised in appendix 1. The results of the survey follow, organised according to responses to specific questions. Where responses are quantifiable, they are summarised in table form in appendix 2

Results: Students' responses

Choice

Students like choice. In fact it is the power, the freedom, the excitement of choosing their own topics to study that appears to appeal most about the NS. Of the 932 respondents, 865 (93%) indicated that they liked being able to choose, and for a wide range of reasons. They enjoyed the work more because it dealt with something of interest to them; they had more background understanding and more readily accessible information on their chosen subject. They felt they had the freedom to explore it. Quite a few expressed their support for selecting their own topics because this enabled them to escape from the 'boring' subjects that teachers generally assign. Of course this view doesn't apply to all students, nor to the same degree for all. There were some for whom a significant complaint was that the choice allowed them by their teachers (in fact by school policy, rather than directly because of syllabus requirements) was too restrictive. On the other hand a small number would have been happier having no choice at all. They felt more comfortable being told what to study, and agonised over selecting something suitable to spend their time on. However, despite the pitfalls that responsibility for making choices had for these newly enfranchised students, the overwhelming majority thought such drawbacks preferable to having teachers direct them in what to study.

Sense of achievement

Most students (over 70%) were pleased with their achievement in the NS. They cited such reasons for this satisfaction as effort put into gathering information, proving a point of view (sometimes coming up with results that 'surprised' others or themselves), showing what they could do if given the opportunity, and pride in the finished work for its polished presentation. Subthemes in this general sense of accomplishment were: learning (where they learnt something of importance to themselves, most significantly in family history or investigation of their future employment area), responsibility (where they met deadlines, used effective time management strategies) and discovery (where, most pleasingly, they felt able to fulfil a creative or imaginative urge, to experiment in English, to make personal discoveries). There was, as one might expect, importance attached to the mark awarded by the teacher. For some, that mattered much more than their own assessment, as indicated by those who answered that they wouldn't know if they were pleased with their achievement until they received their mark. A quarter of the students were not pleased with their achievement, the main reasons being inability to complete their study, problems with organisation, rushed writing-up and poor presentation, and lack of motivation. It is clear that an extended piece of largely independent work puts a great demand on young people's skills in managing their academic lives effectively. Those who succeed gain a fillip, those who don't suffer a heightened sense of failure.

Commitment and effort

Nearly two-thirds of students indicated that they put more effort into the NS than they usually invested in English and another quarter said they put in as much work as usual. The reasons for working harder often involved the perceived importance attached to it, either by the teacher or the students themselves. Next after that in significance came a sense of ownership and responsibility, especially for the look of the final report which was often seen as 'the best' that they could do, an index of their genuine abilities. There was also the pressure 'to get a good mark' urging a number on, but it was edifying to see how many worked harder because they were really interested in what they were doing and appreciated the freedom to pursue study in a way that suited them. There was a further factor affecting the amount of effort put into the NS: as might be expected of a relatively unfamiliar task, it required skills and procedures that students had to learn along the way, and quite a number referred to the time-consuming nature of the research task of data gathering or grappling with new equipment, for instance a computer or a video camera. Those who didn't put as much effort into their NS, fewer than 10%, cited reasons such as confusion about methodology, putting off work until it was too late, feeling overawed by the task and opting out, and even that the self-chosen task didn't turn out to be interesting after all. One mentioned that it was so easy to get information on her topic that the whole thing was a breeze. It would seem that these responses indicating more or less effort raise the issue of whether the NS is perceived as a 'negotiated' or an 'independent' study.

Standard of work

All the extra effort that the NS evoked was perceived to have an impact on the outcome, but perhaps not to the extent it deserved. Over half thought their work in the NS was of a higher standard than they produced for English generally, but over a third thought it much the same. (Again, fewer than 10% thought it of a lower standard than their usual, citing rush, worry, poor organisation, leaving it unfinished, changing topic or confusion about the task as reasons for this.) The perception of the majority that their work *was* better stemmed usually from their pride in the polished form of presentation, as well as the degree of their commitment and care in the preceding stages of the study. There were references to fuller planning, 'more intensive' work, putting more of self and personal thoughts into it, and of course the value of having an extended time to spend 'getting it right'.

Best, worst and most difficult aspects of the NS

The three best features about undertaking an NS appear to be: (i) working on a topic of interest and significance to the student, (ii) having choice, and (iii) having the opportunity to work independently. Respondents to the survey mentioned such things as its providing room for imagination, allowing individual creativity, giving a sense of achievement – sometimes just at being able to accomplish a major task – and setting a personal challenge. There was an interesting current of response that suggested its interpersonal dimension: 'finding out what other people think about your topic' and 'learning to talk to people more'. The worst aspects were: (i) having the stress and responsibility for decision-making, (ii) coping with time management problems, and (iii) the labour of keeping a journal and of producing a high quality report at the end. Also mentioned were technical difficulties such as gaining access to equipment and using it effectively, and limitations such as restrictions on choice, lack of resources and (no doubt more clearly seen by teachers) personal limitations in skills and knowledge. Quite a number mentioned how hard it was to get started, to generate ideas and to sustain their efforts over an extended period. But most difficult of all, and mentioned by a majority of students, was finishing on time. To do all that work relying on their own judgment to decide how and when each step was to be done, preyed on their minds. The study was also an exercise in growing up and coping with the world in adult ways, and it was hard for the majority. On the more positive side, quite a few said that they had no real difficulties, and that it was the enjoyment in what they were doing that carried them through successfully.

Did negotiation help?

Much that has been reported from the students' responses so far has related to the elements of choice and independent study in the NS, rather than with the process of negotiating with the teacher. Indeed the whole framework for this section of the syllabus – and its alternative titles, the Independent or Individual Study – indicate that the emphasis has come to lie elsewhere than on negotiation. It should be noted, however, that interaction between student and teacher and collaborative planning and reflection are central to the concept of this study. It was a pertinent rather than a tautologous question, in the circumstances, to ask if negotiation helped in the NS. Over two-thirds replied yes, leaving a sizable group to comment that they worked largely at home, didn't need or didn't ask for their teachers' contributions, or rejected advice. There were some who blamed their teacher for the poor outcome of their NS, but it could be argued that these students did at least engage in dialogue with someone on their work. There would be quite differing perceptions from teacher and student, one imagines, in these instances of breakdown in communication over the study.

For the two-thirds who judged that they gained from the negotiation process, many acknowledged the way their teachers challenged or extended their initial ideas, gave them better insights into the topic, helped them to re-orient themselves to the subject, modelled methods of enquiry, journal writing and forms of presentation, supplied information and suggested resources, assisted in getting started and in solving problems, and inspired confidence through supportive and accurate feedback. And most importantly, teachers contributed a great deal towards students working efficiently by clarifying expectations, putting the task in perspective and helping with organisation and time management. All this takes teachers' time, and as we shall see from their comments, comes at some cost. Students showed their appreciation for opportunities to consult individually with teachers over questions that mattered to them as learners, and a number said they would not have finished the NS, let alone done well, had it not been for the part their teachers played in the process.

On top of this valuable interaction between teacher and learner, it was interesting to see a number of students refer to the help they received from home. If the NS becomes celebrated as a family achievement as well as an individual one, it may contribute significantly to bridging gaps in students' lives. Alternatively, if students' achievements are being accredited to them as authors of work which their family members are actually largely creating, then there is a problem of equity in assessment. Students didn't refer to this potential difficulty at all.

General comments

As part of the questionnaire students were given the opportunity to make further comments upon their experiences as negotiated learners, or about the Negotiated Study. The following sampling of student voices reveal something of the range of experiences and rewards which the students perceived:

> *The Negotiated Study seems to make people try much harder than they normally do.* (Nathan, Yr 10)
>
> *I am not looking forward to doing one next year as it is not really something you choose entirely yourself. If your finished product does not contain everything that your teacher wants then you lose out. They tell you what to do still.* (Cherie, Yr 10)
>
> *Really this negotiated study helped me in other subjects, with the planning and essay writing skills.* (Holly , Yr 10)
>
> *If we didn't get to choose the topic, it would be boring to do.* (Ashley, Yr 10)
>
> *... it is a lot of fun.* (Daniel, Yr 9)
>
> *We didn't get enough time to do it .* (Troy, Yr 9)
>
> *I took it more seriously than my usual work .* (Robert, Yr 12)
>
> *Negotiated studies show the teacher how able students are able to work on their own ... their true colours emerge.* (Kristie, Yr 10)
>
> *The work I put in was worth it as I received a mark I was very pleased with.* (Natalie, Yr 10)
>
> *It shouldn't be such a big thing.* (Zoe, Yr 10)
>
> *I didn't actually do any negotiating with him. I told him what I was planning to do and that was virtually that. He told me a few suggestions but, that was all .* (Kathryn, Yr 10)
>
> *I think we should do one every term. I really enjoyed this one .* (Leigh, Yr 9)
>
> *Negotiating with my teacher didn't help me because he did not know anything about the topic .* (Peter, Yr 10)
>
> *I slackened off because there was no-one pushing me to get it done.* (Rebecca, Yr 9)
>
> *The Negotiated Study is about the best part of the English course .* (Sally, Yr 10)

Results: Teachers responses

Main advantages of the Negotiated Study

Student ownership and choice, their sense of achievement, and the development of planning and decision-making skills were seen to be the major advantages of the Negotiated Study by the teachers of Year 9 – 12 students. Teachers saw that the opportunities to pursue topics of interest, to develop particular strengths and skills, and to be responsible for the management of an extended learning activity afforded by the negotiated study led to greater student engagement, enjoyment and productivity, 'particularly for the average students'. Several teachers noted that the NS allowed them to further develop relationships with individual students and that the variety of areas of study chosen by their students was both a learning experience for teachers and made the marking/assessment of student products interesting and more enjoyable than marking other set work (for example essays). One teacher's comment that 'skills such as goal setting and reflection are more actively encouraged and visible through this process' is indicative of teachers' awareness of the evolving nature of the subject English and of their own role when the students have greater direction over their learning.

Main disadvantages

In relation to this question those teachers with the most experience in negotiated learning settings saw fewer problems than those with less experience or who taught in more traditionally organised school environments. 'I can't think of too many, provided there's time to sort out each students' focus properly' commented one Year 11/12 teacher, echoing others' concerns about the organising and management of the NS. Of the disadvantages mentioned, students' weak time management was the most frequently noted (by 70% of respondents), followed by managing conferencing with individual students (40%), the difficulty of accessing sufficient appropriate resources (40%), and managing the heavy marking load when their students present their products at the end of the NS (40%). Interestingly a few teachers commented upon the problematic dichotomy between the various teacher roles in relation to the negotiated study – facilitator, critical friend, adviser, evaluator and judge – and wondered how to better balance these roles. Obviously the whole process of the NS becomes a greater burden with the larger classes which have become commonplace in secondary schools and colleges over the last decade.

Also of note are the differences between teachers' interpretations of the role of negotiation in the NS. Some set few restrictions, perhaps leading to a 'project' mentality among students; others are much more directive in setting limits to choice and offering students a very limited range of media and styles for production. Surprisingly, only one teacher (with recent VCE teaching experience) cited 'authenticity' as being a problem. Another concern expressed by one teacher was the number of independent/negotiated studies that students may be undertaking across the learning areas in any particular year of secondary schooling and the impact of this upon students and their learning.

Interpretation of the term 'negotiated learning'

As might be expected, teachers reported differing orientations towards negotiated learning. Overwhelmingly teachers saw it as offering students choice within the learning program and being flexible with deadlines and other organisational aspects. Half of the respondents described negotiation as being a collaboration between teacher and students and about 40% included the idea of negotiating processes as well as content.

Intriguingly, in the light of the TCE syllabuses, 10% of teachers saw little scope for negotiating learning in English: 'apart from the study, little negotiation is involved in the Year 10 course' commented one teacher. However 12% spoke of negotiation as a significant orientation to teaching and learning, a set of theoretical and pedagogical principles which guided their actions in classrooms. This group saw negotiation as pervasive and spoke of the need to develop students' skills in negotiation through all aspects of classwork, but also to develop students' awareness that some things were just not negotiable, even for teachers, and at the very least had to be endured and accommodated.

General attitude to negotiated learning

Answers to this question revealed that mostly teachers held positive attitudes towards whatever it was that they perceived negotiation to be. 'It's the only way to go!,' enthused one in the 12% of respondents who saw negotiation as 'fundamental' to the operation of a democratic, cooperative, and constructivist-based learning community. Slightly more than 80% expressed positive attitudes, while at the same time noting that, in a variety of ways, it is more demanding than 'traditional' teacher-directed classrooms and programs. A common theme in the responses of those teachers who saw themselves as being ambivalent or negative towards negotiation was that while negotiation may be worthwhile for 'mature, high-flying students', it was less valuable, even unworkable, for the less confident and competent learners whose unguided efforts resulted in inferior 'Mickey Mouse' products. One teacher grudgingly conceded that negotiation is 'OK in some situations, but we're inclined to assume that 12 –15-year-olds are capable of adult concepts and practices and they are often NOT.'

Changes in attitude

Most of the responses to this question were framed in the context of the Negotiated Study; approximately 10% were commenting with a broader brush about the practice and philosophy of negotiated learning. Positive experiences in teaching the NS appears to have been a significant influence in changing teacher attitudes. Student response to, and obvious enjoyment of, the opportunities that negotiated studies provide for them to be more influential in their own learning were important to these changes. 'I underestimated my students. They are really just waiting for us to stop talking' commented one Year 11/12 teacher, and another, who had indicated that negotiation was of 'limited use' in response to the previous question expanded:

'I believe that this study has changed my attitude a little but I consider my professional judgment about English to be better than that of my students'.

Of those who indicated that their attitude had not changed, 60% stated they were positive towards negotiation and the Negotiated Study, and 40% were still not convinced that it was appropriate. However both groups mentioned changed practices, increased pressures and better teacher organisation having arisen from their experiences of negotiated studies. One of the original group of action-researchers commented:

> *At first it seemed like a huge shift in approach. Since then working relationships of all kinds have become more open to negotiation, so it feels like a natural way to work and for students to develop the skills they need.*

Conclusions

Although it may now feel like 'a natural way to work' for many of the teachers employing it, negotiation has come about only through a multi-layered process of curriculum change. In Australia it was the persuasive, principled entrepreneurship of Garth Boomer, Jon Cook and others that initiated the movement, the infectious enthusiasm of classroom teachers that sustained it, the warm response of students who confirmed their support and, in Tasmania, the influential administrative encouragement offered by the Principal Curriculum Officer responsible for English at the time that proved decisive in the large-scale shift throughout the State towards negotiation. The change was brought about through a great deal of hard work and vigorous leadership. One of the measures of the success of this labour is the 'naturalness' of its outcome.

In the current educational climate there is less likelihood of such radical change happening, if only because the relative absence of curriculum support personnel pressures teachers to look within the school or within themselves for curriculum renewal. Moreover, in the context of large classes, a crowded timetable and limited opportunities for broader collaborative professional development, it is difficult to sustain and reinforce the impetus of initiatives of this kind. No-one would be surprised to discover that there is a discrepancy between the original paradigm for negotiating the curriculum and how the NS is now carried out in classrooms. Yet despite its taking on myriad forms, negotiation is popular with students, and most teachers affirm its pedagogical value. This is true even for a number of teachers who subscribe cautiously to some of the practices the NS has introduced, and continue to be uneasy about its principles. This group appears to have been convinced by the way that the majority of students have taken up the opportunities offered by the NS to meet their diverse needs, to participate more fully in the construction of an individualised curriculum, and to gain pleasure from the process.

Whether the cause of negotiating the curriculum has been well served by its being mandated by the syllabus is somewhat more difficult to determine. The rarity of negotiation outside the Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board's NS requirements suggests that far fewer teachers would find the time or the inclination to employ it were it not a requirement. There is a cost, however, in its transformation from being a challenge to established practices into becoming yet another instance of one. In some classrooms, so the survey indicates, it is merely a procedure, isolated to a few weeks in the year. The NS can absolve teachers of further responsibility to enact the key learning process expectation of the syllabuses and Departmental Guidelines with regard to negotiation. On the other hand, there has been no suggestion that those teachers committed to the principle of negotiation are in any way deterred from using it by its inscription in stone. If anything, the syllabus initially protected their right to their opinion, and has subsequently been an affirmation that their beliefs are valued and their classroom practice validated.

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Appendix 1

Survey instrument

The survey questionnaires were posted to the teacher coordinating English in the schools which had agreed to participate. There was a covering letter which clarified what was intended by the term 'Negotiated Study' and gave guidelines on how teachers were to administer the survey to their students. The key points were: to conduct the survey in class as soon as possible after the completion of the NS, and to introduce the questionnaire with advice to the students on how to fill in the form (circle appropriate answer and complete the sentence), noting that answers are neither wrong nor right, but an honest opinion was asked for which would have no bearing on awards or attitudes towards their work. The student questionnaire occupied both sides of a single page, with 5 cm spaces for 'completing the sentence'. The questions were:

> *I liked / didn't like* choosing my own topic for the study because:
>
> *I am / am not* pleased with my achievement in the study because:
>
> I put *less / about the same / more effort* into the study than I usually put into English because:
>
> I think the standard of my work in the study is *better than / about the same as / worse than* my usual work because:
>
> Negotiating with my teacher *helped / didn't help* me with my study because:
>
> The things I found most difficult about my study were:
>
> The best thing about doing a negotiated study is:
>
> The worst thing about doing a negotiated study is:
>
> Other comments:

The teacher questionnaire occupied one side of an A4 page, with the questions:

> What do you see as the main advantages of the Negotiated Study?
>
> What are its main disadvantages?
>
> What do you understand by the term 'negotiated learning'? In what ways do you negotiate learning
>
> with students (apart from the study under discussion here)?
>
> What is your general attitude to negotiated learning?
>
> How have your attitudes to negotiation changed since your introduction to it?

A further sheet invited teachers to comment on their students' responses: it was designed as an aid in the interpretation of the students' remarks. There were insufficient numbers of remarks entered on these forms to enable them to be included as primary data, but they have had some impact on this paper's commentary upon both student and teacher responses.

Appendix 2

Table of quantifiable responses

NOTE: Positive responses (liked choice, pleased with achievement, more effort, standard of work better than usual, negotiation helped) are coded [+], neutral responses (about the same effort, standard of work about the same as usual) are coded [/], and negative responses (didn't like choice, not pleased with achievement, less effort, standard of work worse than usual, negotiation didn't help) are coded [-]. Unintelligible responses or no response at all for an item were coded [?].

School	Grade	No.	Choice	Achievement	Amount of Effort	Standard	Negot'n helped
City High A	10	18	17+ : 1-	11+ : 7-	3- : 4/ : 11+	5+ : 9/ : 4-	12+ : 6-
City High A	10	20	18+ : 2-	11+ : 7- (2?)	2- : 6/ : 12+	10+ : 7/ : 2- (1?)	15+ : 4- (1?)
City High A	10	10	9+ : 1-	4+ : 6-	1- : 3/ : 5+ (1?)	5+ : 2/ : 1- (2?)	5+ : 4- (1?)
City High B	9	16	16+ : 0-	11+ : 5-	2- : 5/ : 9+	8+ : 6/ : 2-	7+ : 6- (3?)
City High B	10	26	23+ : 3-	20+ : 4- : (2?)	1- : 7/ : 18+	14+ : 12/ : 0-	12+ : 14-
City High B	10	21	20+ : 1-	16+ : 4- (1?)	1- : 4/ : 16+	13+ : 4/ : 2- (2?)	12+ : 8- (1?)
City High C	9	3	3+ : 0-	3+ : 0-	0- : 0/ : 3+	3+ : 0/ : 0-	3+ : 0-
City High C	10	18	16+ : 2-	11+ : 7-	3- : 7/ : 8+	11+ : 4/ : 3-	14+ : 3- (1?)
City High C	10	11	11+ : 0-	10+ : 1-	1- : 2/ : 8+	6+ : 4/ : 1-	8+ : 3-
City High C	10	17	16+ : 1-	14+ : 3-	3- : 7/ : 7+	7+ : 8/ : 2-	14+ : 3-
City High D	9	18	16+ : 2-	14+ : 4-	1- : 3/ : 14+	13+ : 3/ : 2-	16+ : 2-
City High D	9	14	14+ : 0-	7+ : 7-	3- : 3/ : 8+	5+ : 5/ : 4-	11+ : 3-
City High D	10	19	19+ : 0-	14+ : 5-	1- : 4/ : 14+	13+ : 6/ : 0-	14+ : 4- (1?)
City High E	10	20	18+ : 2-	8+ : 12-	5- : 3/ : 12+	7+ : 9/ : 4-	11+ : 9-
City High E	10	25	18+ : 7-	19+ : 6-	0- : 7/ : 18+	11+ : 12/ : 2-	6+ : 19-
City High E	10	12	11+ : 0- (1?)	7+ : 0- (5?)	0- : 1/ : 9+ (2?)	7+ : 3/ : 0- (2?)	3+ : 7- (2?)

Table of quantifiable responses (continued)

School	Grade	No.	Choice	Achievement	Amount of Effort	Standard	Negot'n helped
City High E	10	15	12+ : 2- (1?)	8+ : 5- (2?)	4- : 4/ : 6+ (1?)	5+ : 7/ : 2- (1?)	7+ : 6- (2?)
City High F	10	18	16+ : 2-	9+ : 8- (1?)	2- : 7/ : 9+	10+ : 6/ : 2-	5+ : 11- (2?)
City High F	10	21	20+ : 1-	18+ : 3-	1- : 8/ : 12+	13+ : 6/ 1- (1?)	7+ : 13- (1?)
City High F	10	23	22+ : 1-	19+ : 4-	1- : 3/ : 19+	15+ : 7/ : 1-	18+ : 5-
City High G	10	34	31+ : 3-	30+ : 4-	2- : 10/ : 22+	19+ : 14/ : 1-	21+ : 12- (1?)
Country District High A	10	10	10+ : 0-	8+ : 2-	0- : 4/ : 6+	8+ : 1/ : 1-	9+ : 1-
Country District High B	9	12	12+ : 0-	8+ : 4-	1- : 4/ : 6+ (1?)	6+ : 2/ : 3- (1?)	8+ : 3- (1?)
Country District High B	10	23	22+ : 1-	18+ : 5-	2- : 4/ : 17+	17+ : 4/ : 2-	17+ : 6-
Country District High C	9	39	38+ : 1-	32+ : 7-	2- : 9/ : 28+	20+ : 16/ : 3-	24+ : 14- (1?)
Country District High C	10	35	34+ : 1-	26+ : 9-	5- : 7/ : 23+	18+ : 13/ : 3- (1?)	12+ : 22- (1?)
Country High A	9	29	23+ : 6-	21+ : 7- (1?)	5- : 17/ : 7+	8+ : 14/ : 6- (1/)	10+ : 19-
Country High A	9	13	8+ : 4- (1?)	8+ : 4- (1?)	2- : 4/ : 7+	6+ : 6/ : 0- (1?)	8+ : 4- (1?)
Country High A	9	15	15+ : 0-	11+ : 4-	0- : 6/ : 9+	8+ : 7/ : 0-	14+ : 1-
Country High A	10	14	14+ : 0-	13+ : 1-	0- : 4/ : 10+	10+ : 4/ : 0-	2+ : 11- (1?)
Country High A	10	23	23+ : 0-	14+ : 9-	3- : 4/ : 16+	11+ : 10/ : 1- (1?)	16+ : 7-
Country High A	10	17	16+ : 1-	11+ : 6-	1- : 5/ : 11+	9+ : 8/ : 0-	10+ : 6- (1?)
Country High B	10	12	12+ : 0-	8+ : 4-	2- : 5/ : 5+	8+ : 3/ : 1-	12+ : 0-
Country High B	10	25	23+ : 1- (1?)	17+ : 6- (2?)	1- : 11/ ; 12+ (1?)	16+ : 6/ : 2- (1?)	18+ : 4- (3?)
Country High C	9	22	20+ : 2-	15+ : 7-	3- : 4/ : 15+	10+ : 8/ : 3- (1?)	18+ : 3- (1?)
Country High C	9	15	14+ : 1-	13+ : 2-	1- : 4/ : 10+	6+ : 9/ : 0-	13+ : 2-
Country High C	9	17	15+ : 1- (1?)	9+ : 6- (2?)	2- : 5/ : 9+ (1?)	8+ : 4/ : 3- (2?)	9+ : 6- (2?)
Country High C	10	21	20+ : 1-	12+ : 9-	2- : 9/ : 10+	11+ : 8/ : 2-	17+ : 3- (1?)
Country High D	9	25	25+ : 0-	22+ : 2- (1?)	1- : 3/ : 21+	19+ : 4/ : 1- (1)	19+ : 6-

Table of quantifiable responses (continued)

School	Grade	No.	Choice	Achievement	Amount of Effort	Standard	Negot'n helped
Catholic School A	9	30	27+ : 3-	19+ : 10- (1?)	4- : 6/ : 20+	18+ : 9/ : 3-	23+ : 7-
Catholic School A	10	27	27+ : 0-	19+ : 8-	2- : 6/ : 19+	15+ : 10/ : 2-	19+ : 7- (1?)
Independent School A	12	19	18+ : 1-	11+ : 4- (4?)	2- : 5/ : 12+	9+ : 7/ : 3-	17+ : 2-
Independent School B	11	11	11+ : 0-	8+ : 1- (2?)	0- : 0/ : 11+	10+ : 1/ : 0-	10+ : 0- (1?)
Independent School B	11-Dec	26	25+ : 1-	21+ : 4- (1?)	0- : 8/ : 18+	16+ : 9/ : 1-	25+ : 1-
Independent School B	11-Dec	24	23+ : 1-	23+ : 1-	0- : 5/ : 19+	16+ : 8/ : 0-	21+ : 3-
Secondary College A	11-Dec	29	26+ : 3-	22+ : 7-	8- : 6/ : 15+	11+ : 12/ : 6-	26+ : 3-
Secondary College B	12	20	18+ : 2-	16+ : 4-	1- : 8/ : 11+	9+ : 9/ : 2-	17+ : 2- (1?)
19 schools	47 classes	932	865 : 62 (5)	669 : 235 (28)	87 : 251 : 587 (7)	502 : 327 : 84 (19)	615 : 285 (32)
Percentages	100%	100%	92.8 : 6.6 (.5)	71.8 : 25.2 (3.0)	9.3 : 26.9 : 63.0 (0.7)	53.9 : 35.1 : 9.0 (2.0)	66.0 : 30.6 (3.4)

Chapter

4

Boys and literacy at Bronston High School

Andrew Kowaluk

Introduction

Bronston High School is a coeducational high school situated south of Hobart, Tasmania. It was established in the mid 1900s to meet the educational needs of an area which is predominantly rural. Despite its proximity to Hobart, there is much to justify the view that the region constitutes a quite distinct sub-culture within the broader Tasmanian population and that within this region itself, there exist quite distinct cultural groupings. It is a culture which is characterised by rurality, socio-economic disadvantage, Aboriginality and entrenched underachievement as significant inhibitants of learning and of language acquisition (Behrens et al. 1978).

For a number of years there has been recognition within the school that many students experience difficulty with those forms of literacy required to succeed at school. While there are students whose grasp of speaking, listening, reading, writing and viewing is excellent and who may be spoken of as not only literate, but also literary, the numbers of these students is disproportionately low when compared to many city high schools.[1] At the other end of the educational spectrum the number of students who struggle with the task of developing competence in language use is much larger. Of those students who find school-based literacy a problem, teachers and parents have consistently reported that the number of boys far exceeds the number of girls. It was an acknowledgment of this situation that led to the process of research into the difficulties experienced by boys in the area of literacy that is the subject of this chapter.

The general aim of this research was twofold. The first objective was to determine the extent and nature of the problems which boys experience and to monitor these on a longitudinal basis. It was considered that an important outcome of any research initiated to fulfil this initial aim was to raise awareness among the staff as a whole concerning the performance of boys in their own particular learning area. It was considered essential that solutions even if only partial and incomplete, be found. Thus, the development and trialling of educational program was established as a second objective of the research project. The project commenced in 1995 and continued into 1998. As it developed a decision was made to focus upon that group of boys who were perceived by their teachers to be most in need of assistance; namely those boys in Grade 9 and 10 who experience persistent failure with those forms of literacy required to succeed at school.

Background reading and raising awareness

The first stage of the project was a process of professional development, of background reading and of reporting. The author attended a series of professional development seminars conducted in the area of boys and education. The external facilitator who presented these seminars was invited to present a whole-staff professional development session at the school. The session succeeded in drawing staff attention to the fact that problems do exist, that they are real and that they are endemic across the whole nation.

Of equal importance was a study group program that was conducted in the school during 1995, 1996 and 1997. This program was initiated to provide a forum for the professional development of staff in a manner which built upon staff expertise and which responded to needs that were perceived to exist within the school. It aimed to provide a vehicle through which staff were confronted with educational issues and in which they were challenged to find solutions. Literacy and the needs of boys provided a focus for three of these sessions; one in each year. In these sessions staff were presented with the findings of research conducted both nationally and within the school. A significant outcome of these early sessions was the adoption of the *Boys Talk* programme by the *Life Skills* program at the school (Friedman 1996). This programme had been developed in South Australia to deal with domestic violence issues. Another outcome was the interest shown by a number of teachers in boys' issues. This manifested itself through continued reading in the area by a small number of these individuals.

The first of the study group sessions involved a general discussion concerning the nature of literacy and the requirements of our own department of education. The second involved the presentation of research data which consisted of Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) Results for 1994 in all subjects offered by Bronston High School, Time Out Room statistics and library borrowing patterns. Staff who attended this session were presented with a model for dealing with the literacy needs of boys which has been developed at James Cook University of Northern Queensland (Alloway et al. 1996). The model proposes a social-constructionalist view of gender and rejects what is deemed to be a skills-based remediation model of dealing with deficiencies in literacy learning. The James Cook model was itself brought under critical scrutiny. The third session involved the presentation to staff of the findings of research conducted by the author into the preferred learning styles of boys and girls.

All of the sessions were well attended and were characterised by lively discussion concerning the issues involved. It was agreed by most members of the staff that there was significant underachievement by boys at the school and that this was most evident in the humanities or where competence in literacy was required. It was also accepted that boys, by and large, were more likely to present challenging behaviours than girls. Those who attended agreed that this was a situation which was evident across the whole nation and which was not confined to any specific socio-economic or ethnic grouping. It was also agreed that by concentrating upon the needs of boys we may be able to resolve many of the educational problems which existed in the school. Since boys comprise by far the majority of our students who struggle with literacy, for example, an understanding of why this is the case may well lead to improved performance. At all times the need to avoid a competing victims syndrome was stressed and reinforced.

The performance of boys across the curriculum

As was stated previously, the first objective of the research project was to determine the nature and extent of the problem. The method adopted in order to meet this aim was that of an examination of TCE results. There were two aspects to this process. In a pilot study conducted by the author, TCE results across all subject areas in the school for 1994 were brought under critical scrutiny. In this way it was hoped that a general picture of performance by boys would emerge. This was followed by a detailed longitudinal study of TCE results in English from 1994 to 1997. It was envisaged that this study would provide an insight into the performance of boys in that subject which deals most directly with the development of mastery of Australian English.

The picture which emerged from the pilot study was one of underachievement by boys in many areas although by no means across the board. In fact, of the 15 subjects offered at the school in which both boys and girls participated in 1994, 8 were subjects in which girls outperformed boys and 7 in which boys outperformed girls. This situation was more marked in the basic subjects than the options. Here boys were outperformed in English, Science and Social Science, but maintained a lead over the girls in both Mathematics and Physical Education.

The result in the humanities subjects was not totally unexpected in subjects which have traditionally been dominated by girls. Girls outperformed boys in English, Social Science and in History.[2] Interestingly, this situation was repeated in Speech and Drama, the subject most closely related to English. When considered as a proportion of gender group, the girls were achieving much better results than the boys. The sciences, however, revealed a number of surprises. Whereas boys have traditionally outperformed girls in Science, the analysis of TCE results for 1994 revealed that girls had taken a lead over the boys even if the margin remained slight. This gain on the part of the girls, however, was not repeated in Mathematics, where boys continued to maintain a lead.

The situation in the optional subjects saw girls doing better than boys in Agriculture, Foods and the Family, Keyboarding and Speech and Drama. Of these the only real surprise was in Agriculture where girls formed 42% of the total enrolment, but 75% of the total number recorded in the more demanding syllabus. Of interest, in the light of the general adherence to traditional gender roles, is the fact that boys were seen to outperform girls in Computers and Information, Art and Craft, Music and Physical Recreation. Of these the most marked differential existed in Computers and Information where the boys were dominating the girls both in terms of participation and achievement. It is interesting to note that boys outperformed girls quite significantly in Physical Recreation, an optional subject, and in Physical Education.

The fact that there was no participation by boys in Child Care and Japanese, or by girls in Design Graphics, Design in Metal and Design in Wood, was a feature of the picture which was revealed by these statistics. It must also be noted that only one boy was recorded as participating in Keyboarding and Communication. Of the subjects that have been traditionally associated with gender there was significant participation by boys in Foods and the Family and by girls in Agriculture. These figures were, of course, confined to one calendar year. Accordingly they should be considered far from conclusive. Even so, they revealed a continued adherence to the notion of traditional gender roles among the student body.

The performance of boys in English

Having undertaken a comparison of achievement by boys across all subject areas at the school the next stage of the research involved a detailed study of performance by boys in English. TCE results at both Year 9 and 10 for 1994 were assessed and classified according to level of achievement and gender. These would then form a subject for comparison in the years to 1997 in order to allow for an accurate picture of performance by gender to emerge.

The Grade 10 results for 1994 provided a rather stark picture with boys providing by far the larger group of students being recorded in the least demanding of the three English syllabuses and the smallest group in the most demanding syllabus.[3] When undertaking a purely numerical comparison, more than twice the number of boys were recorded at EN415B than girls, with a ratio of 11 boys to 5 girls, although the figure recorded at EN417B was much closer to being the same with a ratio of 8 boys to 11 girls. These figures point to underachievement which is marked and which required addressing, but which is not yet startling. When taking into account the fact that of a grade of 86 students, 47 were boys and only 39 girls, a much poorer performance by the male members of the grade is evident. While boys constituted 54% of the total enrolment they made up 69% of those achieving awards in the least demanding English syllabus and only 42% of those achieving in the most demanding syllabus.

A comparison of figures over the four year period from 1994 to 1997 revealed that this level of underachievement was reasonably entrenched. Amongst the rather startling aspects of this comparison were dramatic jumps in the numbers of boys recorded at EN415B and falls in the number of boys achieving at EN417B on a two-yearly cycle. In fact the number of boys recorded in the least demanding syllabus rose from a figure of 13% of the total enrolment in 1994 to 29% of the total enrolment in 1995. They fell again in 1996 only to rise once again in 1997. Simultaneously the number of boys recorded as achieving in the most demanding syllabus dropped from 9% of total enrolment in 1994 to 5% in 1995. This slide, however, was arrested in 1996 and increased once again in 1997.

The reason for these peaks and troughs is difficult to ascertain and called for a more detailed analysis of the data. As every experienced classroom teacher will report, performance can be a function of the year group in question and of particular groupings within that grade. For reasons that are not always obvious, some year groups will perform better than others even when variables such as the teachers involved, the program of work offered and the type of grouping involved will be the same. This is true in mixed ability English classes no matter how much attention is devoted to ensuring that these groupings are determined in an equitable manner. It may well be that the dramatic peaks and troughs were a function of this phenomenon, although their occurrence at two-yearly intervals suggested that there may be other factors at play. It was considered that a comparison of each year group as it moved from Year 9 to Year 10 would be revealing.

When the three year groups in question were considered a rather interesting pattern was revealed.[4] The first group of the investigation was the subject of a drop in performance from Grade 9 into Grade 10. This rather disturbing situation was not repeated in the two subsequent year groups. These groups experienced an improvement in performance from Grade 9 into Grade 10. While the time-frame of the analysis is too short to point to this as a long-term trend, it may well be more indicative of the pattern of performance by boys than that which points to a drop in achievement. The fact that boys mature later than girls and the greater seriousness which boys might adopt towards their studies at the business end of schooling may be factors that contribute to an explanation of such a trend.

While it lies outside the parameters of this report, it is interesting to note that these gains from Year 9 into Year 10 were not made at the expense of girls. In fact girls were still outperforming boys by a large margin over both the two-year periods involved. Such statistics are encouraging to the educator wishing to avoid any occurrence of a competing victims syndrome. There is little to support a claim that gains on the part of boys were occurring at the expense of girls.

TCE results as a measure of literacy learning

It might be suggested, with some justification, that an analysis of TCE results alone will reflect a rather limited understanding of literacy learning and involve a simplistic measure of achievement. Literacy does, of course, involve cross-curricular perspectives that will only be ignored by definition in terms of achievement in English alone. Moreover, the development of a range of sophisticated measures of achievement in English call into question the validity of relying upon subject criteria to the exclusion of all else.

However, it is important to remember that the 11 criteria which defined achievement in English over the years of the study involved all five modes of language as well as an appreciation of social context.[5] In order to achieve a result in Grade 10 English, for example, students were required to demonstrate that they could:

- speak and listen effectively (criterion 1)
- read widely and flexibly (criterion 2)
- write clearly and fluently (criterion 3)
- communicate appropriately (criterion 4)
- develop strategies for effective spelling, punctuation and style (criterion 5)
- explore issues using texts (criterion 6)
- evaluate texts (criterion 7)
- compose texts (criterion 8)
- work with others (criterion 9)
- understand the experiences and beliefs of others (criterion 10)
- negotiate and make judgements about their own learning (criterion 11).

Quite clearly these criteria provided the foundation for a rich and varied curriculum which fostered the development of a solid grounding in Australian English. Assessment against these criteria involved the provision of a range of teaching and learning activities across all the areas of literacy learning. Furthermore, achievement by students against these criteria only occurred where there was significant literacy learning. To the extent that the assessment process was undertaken in a professional manner they provided an accurate measure of language acquisition at the lower levels of achievement and of increasing sophistication in the use of language at the higher levels.

Developing and trialling a program of action

As the research program progressed it became apparent that a program of action was needed as a matter of some urgency. This call for action was made more acute by a particularly demanding Grade 9 which was moving into Grade 10 in 1997. This grade was bottom heavy with a group of boys characterised by challenging behaviours and lack of performance. It was recognised that a factor which contributed to these behaviours was precisely that lack of achievement and the sense of failure which they experienced. The English staff considered that these students were failing in mixed ability classrooms and that they were inhibiting the learning of other members of their classes. The decision was made that these students would be grouped together in Grade 10. They would be taught by the author who would design a program of study designed to meet their needs.

The basic skills literacy program designed for these students was characterised by a blend of highly structured whole class activities and of teacher directed intervention strategies. Since the class was characterised by failure it was essential that they be allowed to experience success from the very outset. The members of the class were made aware of the fact that they had been grouped in order to allow for the development of basic levels of literacy and that the reason for their grouping was either failure or underachievement in the past. They were provided with a simple and highly structured program of work which they could complete individually and with little difficulty. This would allow for the establishment of a classroom routine and for the students to experience success in literacy learning, albeit at a basic level. It was considered that individual intervention with students would be more successful where these routines were established.

The general characteristics of the program were:

- simple tasks increasing in complexity where required
- highly structured tasks
- a degree of repetition and repetitive work in order to reinforce learning
- initial emphasis upon quantity in order to develop work habits
- teacher initiation and direction
- initial emphasis upon working as individual students
- regular monitoring of progress and feedback to students
- short-term goals within a long-term programme
- a stress upon pride in achievement
- work requirements which were clearly delineated
- work requirements which were realistic and sensitive to capacity of students

It is important to note that, initially, these structures allowed little opportunity for negotiating the curriculum or for individual goal setting. The members of the class had failed on a consistent basis in mixed ability classes where the curriculum allowed for student-directed as well as teacher-directed learning. There seemed little point in repeating the mistakes of the past. If these students were to experience a degree of success from the start it was considered that simple, structured tasks in an environment which was teacher-directed and involved a degree of compulsion was more likely to be successful. The tasks with which they were presented required only completion in order to allow success.

As students began to finish tasks and be awarded increasingly better ratings they also began to develop a greater degree of confidence and self-direction. Increasingly, they felt a greater desire to provide input into the curriculum. Many chose to work at home as well as at school. One remarked that this was the first time he had ever taken work home to finish. He began to do this on a regular basis and was writing journal entries a page in length and of some quality. A second student noted that he had just finished reading a novel on his own for the first time since he began schooling. After a short period of time he opted to read for a full 50 minute period when given the option. The number of students who maintained a cynical attitude towards class and who required a degree of compulsion diminished greatly. Students began to ask for stories to be read to them, to be given more time to read on their own and even to be allowed to complete reasonably sophisticated writing tasks.

The initial focus of the program was upon reading, writing and spelling. The reading program consisted of class reading of novels and silent reading. Class readings were carried out at the front of the room with the class forming a circle. Students were not forced to read aloud, but were encouraged to do so. Few chose to read, but all enjoyed the experience of being read to by their teacher. The novels which were chosen were Paul Zindel's *The Pigman* and Gary Paulsen's *Harris and Me*. Students were encouraged to offer opinions and to discuss issues arising out of the novels in a way which was often lively, but always controlled. Mutual respect between the members of the class and their teacher ensured that procedures necessary for effective classroom discussion were adhered to at all times. Students were required to respond to the novels in writing, but not in a way which detracted from their enjoyment of the experience. In addition to these novels students were presented with a range of short stories and of everyday texts.

The silent reading program consisted of a lesson every two weeks in which students were asked to read for at least 20 minutes, but in which they could read for the whole lesson if they wished. Most took up this second option as the first term progressed. A wide range of reading matter was provided, however, students were required to read novels. This did not prove a chore as the school is fortunate to have a range of easily read novels which were found to be interesting by the students involved. Students were required to keep a reading log and to write in their journal every two weeks. These entries were to be at least a half-page in length. There were no limitations on their writing except that this must be to do with the novels that they were reading. After initial reluctance a number of students found that they enjoyed this form of writing and some were able to write a page or more of meaningful text. These journal entries were seen as an important measure of student understanding of the texts which they were reading, but also of their ability to write in a relatively free manner.

The initial focus of the writing program was to increase the length of student responses. When presented with a writing task many of the students would write one word or single sentence responses which were incomplete and which reflected their speech patterns. Sentence structure and paragraphing were modelled, and students were encouraged to write correctly. These efforts, however, met with only limited success. This may be a function of the materials which were presented to students which often consisted of short pieces of text to which students were required to respond in writing. When presented with more complex tasks, however, these same students would often produce work of even less merit. Thus, for example, while some students found it difficult to respond to closed comprehension questions in a way which was grammatical they found it even more difficult to do this when presented with open-ended tasks.

A successful feature of the writing program consisted of the spelling program. Students were issued with an Individualised Spelling List to which they added words that they were misspelling. They were tested upon these words often by their teacher. This testing process was extremely important as it allowed for the demonstration of learning strategies on an individualised basis. It was conducted in a non-competitive and non-threatening way. Many students enjoyed the experience of improving their spelling and of spelling words that they had frequently misspelled in the past. Few considered this to be a chore and there were measurable improvements in the ability of these students to spell. Direct intervention at the level of the individual proved to be the key to success.

The performance of the Basic Skills grouping

The Basic Skills class was made up of 17 boys.[6] Of this group a total of 14 were able to improve upon their results. While four members of the group had failed English in Grade 9, none failed in Grade 10. While no boys were recorded as achieving an OA at EN115B in Grade 9 and only 5 an HA, the figures from EN415B revealed that 2 had achieved an OA and 10 an HA.[7] One of the group, a student who had failed English in Grade 9, was able to achieve an award at EN416B, the middle syllabus. After an initial reluctance, he began to experience success and went from strength to strength over the course of the year. Of the 3 who did not improve their performance only one experienced a lower result.

A key to improved performance on the part of these students was the fact that a homogenous grouping enabled tasks to be set which were reasonably simple to begin with, but which increased in complexity as the year progressed. While less was expected of the students in terms of the complexity of the task, much more was expected in terms of workload. Similarly, whereas some evidence of attempting tasks and of achievement at a fairly simple level was sufficient in order to demonstrate achievement in the mixed ability classes of the past, a higher standard of achievement on tasks which were less complex was expected to demonstrate achievement in the Basic Skills grouping. The grouping was not a 'soft' option. In many respects much more was expected of the students.

A significant spin-off from the Basic Skills grouping was an improved performance not only by boys in this grouping, but also in the other classes. In fact a significant rise in the numbers of both boys and girls achieving in EN417B was recorded. This was the highest figure recorded over the period of the study. Gains had been made by boys. Importantly, these gains were not made at the expense of girls. While the reasons for this may be fairly complex, they must be attributed in part to the grouping of students. Teachers of all classes reported that, dealing with less challenging behaviours and being able to offer a program geared towards extending students rather than alleviating large numbers of severe literacy problems had a positive effect upon the performance of their students. There can be little doubt that this was a significant factor.

Conclusions

The conclusions which can be drawn from the research conducted at Bronston High School are rather varied. They point to levels of underachievement on the part of boys in the senior years of English which are quite disturbing and appear to be reasonably entrenched within the school. They point to high numbers of boys being recorded in the least demanding syllabus and small numbers in the most demanding. Encouragingly, a picture emerges where the level of achievement improves from Grade 9 into Grade 10. Equally encouraging is the data which points to success at both ends of the educational spectrum and across both gender groupings when boys with severe problems are withdrawn for the purpose of learning in English.

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1 This fact was noted in The Huon Valley Study (Behrens, et al. 1978). It is also evident when comparing performance against moderation instruments of students at the school with students at city schools within the local educational district.

2 The school offers students in Grades 9 and 10 a choice between Social Science and History.

3 The TCE offers students the opportunity to achieve at three related syllabuses in both Grade 9 and 10. The least demanding of these is EN415B in Grade 10 and EN115B in Grade 9. The most demanding of these is EN417B in Grade 10 and EN117B in Grade 9. A fourth syllabus, designed for those students with severe literacy deficiencies is also offered. This is EN201B.

4 The year groups which were the subject of investigation was the Grade 9 of 1994 which moved into Grade 10 in 1995, the Grade 9 (1995) into 10 (1996) and the Grade 9 (1996) into 10 (1997).

5 The TCE criteria were revised in 1997 and are currently being trialled. The new criteria, which number 9, differ in some important respects from those which they replaced. Even so, it is considered that the comments made are equally valid for both sets of criteria.

6 It is interesting to note that gender was not a criteria for membership of the class. It was simply a fact that the vast majority of those whom the staff considered would benefit from the program were boys. A grouping consisting predominantly of boys with the inclusion of 1 or 2 girls was not considered in the interest of either gender group.

7 Achievement by students in Grades 9 and 10 under the TCE is measured according to the scale; OA, Outstanding Achievement; HA High Achievement; SA Satisfactory Achievement; AC Conscientious Attempt; NN No Result.

Part
2
Different literacies, different cultures

Chapter

5

Literacies online: What's new?

Angela Dudfield

Introduction

This paper aims to address the question, 'What's new about online literacies?'. The texts which are produced online are new in unprecedented ways, and in ways which are unparalleled in offline texts, as will be demonstrated throughout this paper. The question of how these texts are new is explored with a view to understanding how educators might best meet the needs and demands that are being placed on students as we move into a new millennium. As societies on a global scale embrace the advances of technology, the requirement for technological literacy is unquestionable. Access to the skills necessary for the successful and meaningful participation in the Information Age which is upon us is crucial. Luke (1997) comments that it is '...encumbent (sic) upon educators to be informed about the many issues at stake in order to support arguments for the implementation of electronic interactive learning systems into their teaching areas' (p.32).

The challenge of students becoming "internet literate" is one which is not adequately being addressed by educators, who tend to be 'technologically reticent ' (Turkle, 1995). Teachers have typically grown up in a 'book' or 'text-based' tradition, a tradition which values print, holding books as the dominant paradigm for learning and knowledge (Lankshear, Peters and Knobel, 1996). Teachers have been 'conditioned' all of their lives to 'think like a book', being 'brainwashed by print' (Green and Bigum, 1993) and ways of using the internet in the name of education are still arguably constrained and author directed. Furthermore, until educators discontinue replicating the text based traditions (Thomson, 1998; Lankshear and Bigum 1998), become media literate themselves and learn how to construct interactive texts, the potential for using the internet for all its educational possibilities is severely under-developed.

The paper examines a range of textual practices which are required for the successful participation in literacies online. In so doing, it emphasises the distinctly new and evolutionary practices which are becoming natural for a new media savvy generation.

Reinking (1997) points out that "...reading on some type of computer screen may be as endearing to future generations as reading pages in books has been to ours" (p.643). This paper argues the need for educators to learn not only what textual practices are emerging online, but what the implications for such practices might have for their teaching. Neilsen (1998) warns that if the technological gulf between students and teachers continues to widen, there is a real danger of schooling getting in the way of authentic learning and education.

Virtual States

Textual practices on the Internet are diverse, ranging from emailing a friend, to reading a web page, to participating in online video-conferencing. Dudfield (1998) has identified three 'virtual states' to categorise the technological range in which literacies occur. These states include the following:

1. those which are text-dependent (text in this instance refers to the discrete use of the characters on a keyboard to shape meaning) such as email, listserv groups, newsgroups, bulletin boards, talkers, MUDs, MOOs (the acronym MOO stands for MUD, Object Oriented, with MUD itself and acronym for Multi User Dungeon. MOOs evolved from MUDs, which evolved originally from the genre of 'dungeon and dragon' role playing games, hence the use of the term dungeon);
2. those which use multimedia texts (which use a combination of text, images, animations, video clippings, audio files), such as interactive web sites and virtual worlds;
3. and those which are mixed reality texts, (i.e. which use a combination of video-conferencing with text, audio, virtual 'whiteboards') such as CUSeeMe and some distance education packages developed by educational institutions. What follows is a brief examination of the text types within each of these states, and a discussion about some of the unique social and linguistic structures and features of these states.

1. Virtual State 1 (Text Dependent)

Email

In discussing email I want to particularly focus on email networks, such as listserv communities and email learning groups. It is important to note the terms 'communities' and 'groups', as email is the medium within which people participate and communicate in groups. Email 'posts' are a form of asynchronous communication, that is, the communication occurs within gaps of time, and participants are not required to be online at the same time to communicate.

Email is also inadvertently hypertextual. Some threads of conversation will be taken up and used as the stimulus for further discussion, some posts will be read avidly word for word, others may not. Each reader is the author of their own reading path, and will be the author of their own posts using threads or excerpts of texts of others. The following example is a perfect example of how one person has taken threads of conversation from two other people and responded to both of them. It also exemplifies a number of other common phenomenon in text-based realities. The context is a mailing list related to the use of computers in classrooms and this thread shows the response of one person who has (in jest) been accused by two other subscribers of playing some antics online.

Line 1 uses an emoticon of an unhappy face – look sideways and there's two eyes, a tear drop, and lips compressed into a grim line. Line 2 uses a word surrounded by two asterisks as a form of emphasis and to represent tone of voice. Line 6 uses another form of emphasis by capitalising all the letters of a word. Capitalising a word is commonly associated with 'shouting' in online interaction, and is usually considered a breach of netiquette (internet etiquette). Lines 1-7 show Eric's response to the accusations of person 1 (lines 8-12) and person 2 (lines 13-14). Person 2 uses a wink emoticon ;) to demonstrate a teasing tone, and the overuse of exclamation marks and question marks are used for exaggeration purposes.

Figure 1

```
1.      :~|

2.      Well *sorry*
3.      You are both wrong!
4.      I wish I had thought of it and I did jump on the bandwagon but I can't
5.      take the credit!

6.      I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the REAL culprit
7.      especially in their managing to pin the tail on this donkey.

8.      >>I suspect that the question of why certain mail messages were dated 14
9.      >>hours ahead of real time, and one or two other questions related to
10.     >>mysterious mail reaching us via the US, could be answered by seeing if
11.     >>O is in a different time zone.  Perhaps Eric can help us??? (or
12.     >>should that be Eric, King of Free-mail?)


13.     >Yup, I nominate / second Eric as the culprit... I've seen some strange things
14.     >coming out of O lately ;)

15.     ============================================================
16.     ) ) )
17.     ( ( (          Eric
18.     ____
19.     )    (_)
20.     (____)
21.     ============================================================
```

Also included in this excerpt is Eric's .sig file, his 'signature' of lines 15-21. Eric has included an ASCII picture of a coffee cup. The use of ASCII art, or art created solely by keyboard characters, is a common attribute of text-based states, whether to refer to something personal (as in this case), or to create a visual metaphor for the design of a virtual space as frequently the case in talkers and MOOs.

The use of the tag > is created by many email clients when the user selects the 'reply' function. In this example it shows the sequence of the posts. Person 1 posted first, he was replied to by person 2, and then they were both replied to by Eric. So person 1's email has been replied to twice, hence the use of two tags >, and person 2 has been replied to once, hence the singular tag >.

As a means for conducting tutorials with students, I have found that email network groups are most successful. Students have reported to me that they feel much more empowered in email tutorials, simply because they are given the opportunity to express their opinions and ideas. In face to face tutorials, students report such phenomena as: they frequently don't make the effort to articulate what they think, they feel intimidated by the most outspoken member of the group, and they feel worried about disagreeing with ideas and causing friction in the group. In contrast, the email tutorial requires them to post to prove participation, it offers the opportunity to reflect and consider ideas before posting, and it has a distance which allows them to critically reflect on opposing viewpoints without feeling intimidated or personally affronted.

Whilst more research needs to be done about the learning outcomes possible for students in email networks, a recent summary of findings from the field conducted by Knobel, Lankshear, Honan and Crawford reported, "Present findings suggest strongly that the particular purposes to which email networks are put can significantly influence learning outcomes" (1997, p.46).

MOOs, MUDs and talkers

Synchronous text based virtual realities, or 'real-time talk' communities, are articulated through a range of expressions, including MOOs, MUDs, talkers and their derivations. Each expression has its own unique set of command protocols, and can be accessed using a range of software clients which each have their own particular user interface. The instance used to illustrate various literacy features which occur in text-based realities is the partial transcript of a text produced on a role-playing MOO.

The following excerpt is taken from a scene on a role-playing MOO called Dragonsfire. The theme of Dragonsfire is based on Anne McCaffrey's novels about PERN, a science fiction fantasy series about a colony world on a distant planet in which colonists transformed an indigenous life-form into 'dragons', and dragons and colonists work together to overcome forces of evil. In this excerpt colonists/dragons are watching the hatching of eggs.

Figure 1: Transcript from a Role-Playing MOO

> *Llyssa bounces — she's given up the tippy-toe thing. It just didn't work...hopping, on the other hand, works fairly well. Except for the sands going out of sight every time gravity takes effect. Sharding forces of nature, always interfering. "I can't see /anything/!" comes the loud lament, voice meant to carry over the blurred buzz of many conversations carried on at once.*
>
> *On the sands, Kelp-Strewn Coral-Green Dragonet paddles from face to face, inspecting auburn hair and squid-ink black, her head wobbling vaguely as desperate eyes try to find the One.*
>
> *On the sands, Kiris pulls heavy strawberry-blonde hair off her neck. Should've braided it. Actually, probably should've brushed it too. Fingers twist in it, outlet for pent up energy.*
>
> *Hali settles in, careful of her skirts and even more so of the half-Turn child shielded in her cloak; she trades that glance with Charania, and long fingers seek her man's.*
>
> *On the sands, Fingerpainted Egg hunches — gargoyles — as if to conserve energy. A few chips have flaked from its upper surface, but the remaining shell shines smoothly still. Waiting.*

Reprinted from: Dragonsfire MOO 1997, Katrineth's Eighth Hatching [Online].
Available: http://www.omnigroup.com/People/Friends/arien/df/logs/97.02.16.kathatching8.txt

This is an example of interactive reflective role-playing, improvised, yet also carefully constructed due to the delay time between typing, thinking, revising and then pressing the enter key for thoughts to translate into text. It is more than speech, it is different to the written word, it is evolutionary, and participants are constructed as actively engaged literate subjects.

One of the most interesting features of this type of text is that of its production. Participants co-create a narrative using a combination of words to make explicit paralinguistic bodily cues, words to express thoughts, words to construct the 'space' in which the action is occurring, and words for dialogue. Landow (1998) comments on the way in which texts are now co-authored in collaborative interactive exchanges within cyberculture, and how the notion of a single author of a text has become outdated. He explains:

> *By actively engaging themselves in the continuous exchange and proliferation of collectively-generated electronic publications, individually-designed creative works, manifestos, live on-line readings, multi-media interactive hypertexts, conferences, etc., Avant-Pop artists and the alternative networks they are part of will eat away at the conventional relics of a bygone era where the individual artist-author creates their beautifully-crafted, original works of art to be consumed primarily by the elitist art-world and their business-cronies who pass judgement on what is appropriate and what is not.*
>
> (Landow, 1998, online)

Collaboration, collective writing, collective artistry and group dynamics have become an integral part of social practices online.

Participants who co-create texts in this manner are in a dynamic state of reader-writer flux. They are co-constructing the text in imaginative, innovative ways. Each 'encounter' will be unique and diverse in nature, dependent upon which characters happen to be logged on, how often those characters have interacted previously with one another, and the nature of their 'in character' and 'out of character' relationships within the community.

This is unique to the 'chat' medium and, as identified by Dudfield (1998), texts of this nature are both grammatically intricate and have a high lexical density (ie the number of content words is significantly higher than the number of grammatical words). This type of text demands of participants a high level lexical processing, which is a feature associated with written texts. It is considerably more sophisticated than the label "chat" conjures up.

Kolko (1996, online) notes,

> *The world within which members of a text-based virtual reality interact is built from words, and it is a world where sentences, words, and letters are the sum total of the "places" people meet, where they tell and listen to stories, create stories in tandem, play, work, and live (for some) significant portions of their lives with friends, colleagues and virtual strangers..... We are not merely the reader-as-writer of hypertext of which Michael Joyce writes; nor are we the narratee implicated in the performance of narration Adam Newton notes in Narrative Ethics. Rather, we are both reader and writer, we are the creator and the created.*

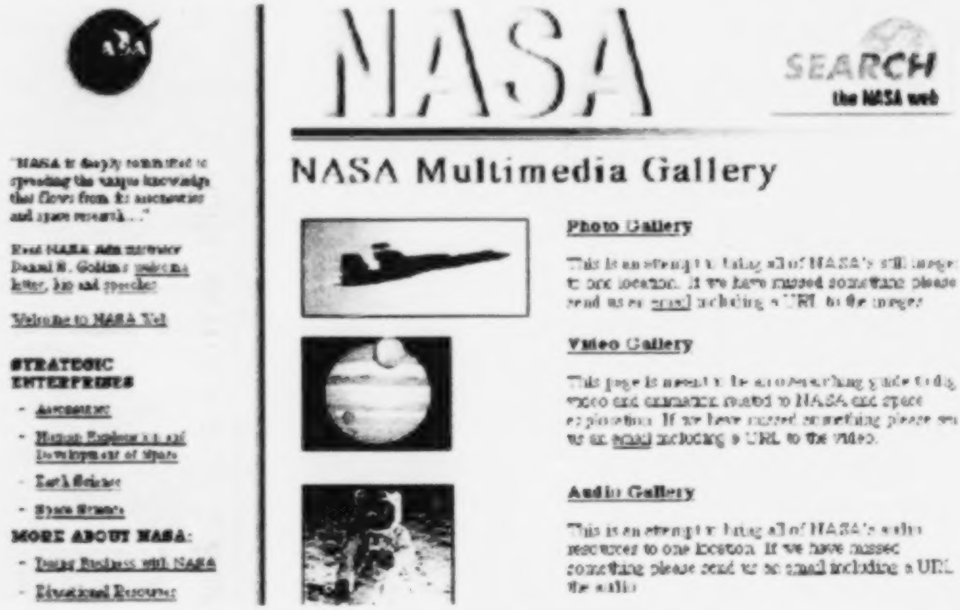
The words used in this text have created the reality for these users, and each user relies upon the participation and cues of the other for the text to continue. MOOs, MUDs and talkers also have a diverse range of other discursive practices which include: message boards, news files, mail protocols, character descriptions, room descriptions, and objects and their associated 'macro' messages which are programmed to appear upon command.

Whilst chat sites are more commonly known for their role-playing and social purposes, they have also been utilised for news, information and educational means. One weekly television news program (http://sunday.ninemsn.com.au/) in Australia invites viewers to come to their chat site at the conclusion of their broadcast to "discuss" issues raised in their feature report with their special guests, ranging from politicians to celebrities.

2. *Virtual State 2 (Multimedia)*

Dudfield (1998) uses the term 'textual pastiche' to describe the way in which an interactive web page, or a multimedia virtual world is a textual artefact, which contains a multiplicity of codes or elements. These include elements such as hypertextuality, the dominance of various visual forms, and the use of other multimedia texts. As Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) describe, '...images are polyphonic, weaving together choices from different signifying systems, different representational modes, into one texture' (p. 178). Texts as a pastiche include the use of such textual elements as movie clips, pop-up menus, scroll-down windows, message boards, forms, chat rooms, email links, hyperimages and hyperlinks.

Figure 2: Interactive Web Site



Reprinted from NASA 1998, NASA Multimedia Gallery, [Online]. Available: http://www.nasa.gov/gallery/index.html

An example of this is the NASA web site as shown in Figure 2. This site has interview transcripts, newspaper reports, a photo gallery, a sound bank, a host of video clips to view, a search engine, information files, educational pages for teachers, access to "live" NASA TV coverage, and links to many other scientific resource pages.

Bolter (1998) argues that the use of graphical images and representations on the web will be the call for a radical change in the way educators value the visual. In examining the use of visual texts in education, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) note that as children

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progress through their school years, visual texts become less valued, often restricted in upper years to the use of scientific tables, maps, charts and the like. However, in order to 'read' texts in cyberspace, cyberliteracies and hypermedia, children need skills of critically reading and interpreting visual texts within the technological medium.

Lemke (1998) claims that multimedia authoring and reading skills will become the generic literacies of the 'Information Age'. Lankshear, Bigum, Durrant, Green, Morgan, Murray and Snyder (1996) further explore the implications of the multimedia nature of technological literacies and state

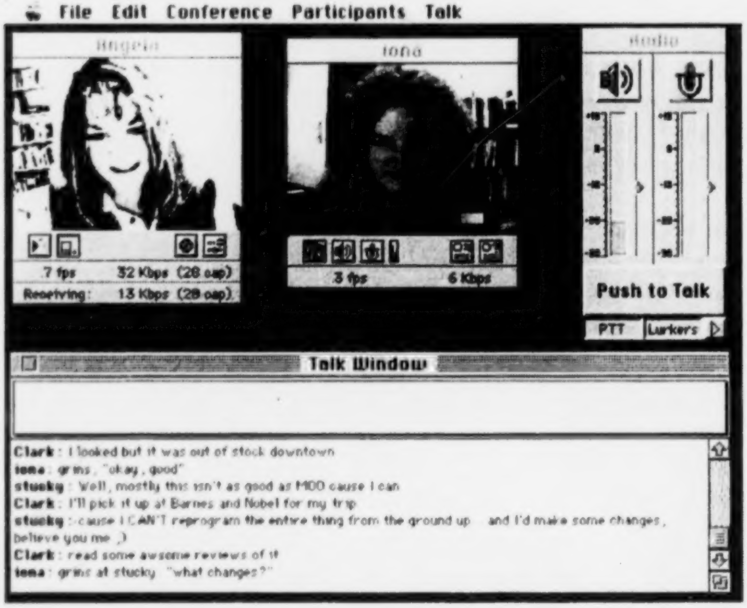
> *The digital text is radically interactive, and it challenges the conventional reader-writer distinction in important ways. In addition, the fact that the digital text realigns alphabetic, graphic and sound components, allowing simultaneous processing of word, image and sound, poses challenges to existing notions of disciplines and subjects.* (p.350)

Although Lankshear et al are correct about the potential for digital text to be radically interactive, educators appear to be slow on the uptake in constructing interactive web sites and making use of all the potentials they offer.

3. *Virtual State 3 (Mixed States)*

Mixed or augmented realities use a combination of a webcam which sends real time video from one person to other(s), and audio for real time talking. In many instances the technology for this requires high speed connections to the internet and considerable memory. Both visual and audio transmissions can be disjointed and in the case of CUSeeMe a text window is also used.

Figure 3: Video Conferencing using CUSeeMe



Clark : I looked but it was out of stock downtown
iona : grins, "okay, good"
stucky : Well, mostly this isn't as good as MOO cause I can
Clark : I'll pick it up at Barnes and Nobel for my trip
stucky : cause I CAN'T reprogram the entire thing from the ground up and I'd make some changes, believe you me ;)
Clark : read some awsome reviews of it
iona : grins at stucky "what changes?"

The example in Figure 3 shows how all three text types – the visual, the audio and the text are used. Also in this example there are four participants, but only two have web cameras, so the other two rely on the audio and text means to communicate. One participant found her computer couldn't send both audio and visual without crashing,

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so she relied upon the combination of visual and text only to communicate. A closer examination of the text in the text window reveals more common features about text-based communication – the use of emoticons such as the smiley or wink ;), the use of expressions such as "grins" to represent paralinguistic cues, the use of capitals for emphasis and the use of dots and gaps (....) to signify pauses in speech.

The participants of this text are conducting several conversations simultaneously, which is a common feature of 'chatting' online due to the delay and wait-time between responses. A user can process what several people are saying and simultaneously be responding to each one in turn as the conversations scroll past on the screen. Many people when first faced with a lively group of people chatting online find it impossible to keep up, to work out what is going on , to determine who is talking to whom, and to actually 'read' the text.

Here Clark is answering Angela, whose comment cannot be seen as it has scrolled off the text window, and is discussing the purchase of a book which they are both reading in order to research the theme of a role-playing MOO. Iona and stucky are having a conversation initiated by Clark earlier about the relative merits of MOOs over CUSeeMe, as stucky finds CUSeeMe incredibly limiting and frustrating in terms of production of text.

Conclusion: So What's New?

Figure 4 emphasises some of the "newness" that has evolved in the various states examined in this paper. The new literacies online are a unique and complicated rearticulation of old and new literacies, with new social and discursive practices which don't have a "real life" equivalent. There are new literacies existing and evolving online. Hypertext is causing new reader subjectivities, visual texts are repositioning users as viewers, web pages are complex in design and architecture, and their pastiche nature requires new ways of looking at, reading and participating in texts.

Texts are no longer the domain of the single author but are co-constructed, and probably one of the most unique text types online is that of the text-based realities, in which users are always in a dynamic state of reader-writer flux. These texts are highly innovative, and as noted previously demand a high level of lexical processing for participation.

The sites of social discourse that have emerged through the new technologies have given rise to the development of community, of participation, of creation and interaction. The Internet has sometimes been referred to by the media as "The Information Superhighway", but the key to what's new online is not so much how people 'navigate' the net, nor is it how they passively receive information. 'What is new' incorporates a complex and composite array of textual practices involving action, interaction, collective artistry and group dynamics. Literacies online are significantly unique: in their linguistic structures and features, in the social sites of online communities in all virtual states, and in the discursive practices surrounding the participation in each of these social sites.

To offer students the skills and opportunities to be successful participants in the literacies of the 21st century, teachers need to critically examine the issues of 'What's new?' that have been the focus of this paper. Teachers need to consider a paradigm of critical pedagogy, or perhaps 'pedagogies'. This will surely involve addressing the complexities of multiliteracies, and such pedagogies will have to be sufficiently robust to embrace both the continuity and the disjunction of old and new literacy technologies.

Figure 4: Significant linguistic structures and features of a cross-section of online texts

Discursive Practices	Range of text types	Social Practices	Linguistic Structures and Features
1. Text based realities Email Talkers / MOOs / MUDS	• Casual correspondence • Discussions, debates, seeking and offering information • ASCII symbols • Acronyms & abbreviations • Interactive chat • Mail protocols • Interactive games & RP • Names, descriptors & profiles • Command-driven texts • News files • Message boards	• Community participation • Selection of own reading & response paths • Identity construction • Reader subjectivity - the reader as an expert & author	• Asynchronous communication • Threaded conversations • Techniques for emphasis of words Indicators for pauses in speech • Grammatical Intricacy • Lexical Density • Concentration of paralinguistic cues • Synchronous and asynchronous means of communication • Multiple threads of speech • Reflective writing • Grammatically intricate texts • Reader-Writer state of flux
2. Multimedia realities Interactive web pages	• Visual texts • Audio and video • Hyperlinks • Forms • Menus • Diverse types of text	• Reader the constructor of own reading path	• Hypertextuality • Text as a pastiche • Visually saturated texts • Text is lexically dense
3. Mixed realities	• "real" images • audio text "talk"	• Face-to-face communication	• Use of 'text-based' cues to complement audio & visual

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Chapter

6

The Potted Pair

Rethinking the heterosexual pair as a site for liberatory relationships

Jacqui Martin

> *...and the tale has no abode or place of being except in the telling only and there it lives and makes its home and therefore we can never be done with the telling.*
> (McCarthy 1994, p. 143)

Introduction

This chapter is an exploration of the social discourses and power structures that work to maintain a dominant binary in western thinking – masculinity/femininity, and its embodiment in practice as the heterosexual pair. Using poststructuralist theory as a framework, I attempt to deconstruct and challenge the traditional, rationalist and oppositional notions of binary thinking and the associated power differentials that privilege one member of the binary pair over the other (Connell 1995; Porter 1991; Davies 1993; Dimen 1989).

My particular concern is an examination of the discourse of the romantic binary, in particular in relation to the ideology of sexuality. By advocating a critical framework this study makes visible the oppressive and repressive restrictions of the discourse and suggests ways in which the 'romantic pair' can be redefined, rethought and restructured for future emancipatory relationships.

The dominant construction of masculine/feminine relationships has at its core the expectation of heterosexuality with attachment to a member of the opposite sex, with children, a family and all the associated societal trappings. This dominant construction of the romance relationship maintains hegemonic relations of power and is in the interest of those who have the majority of power, hegemonic males (Connell 1987). The construction of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity is used to maintain the dominant narratives of the discourse. This is the dominant romantic narrative of western culture.

Pairing occurs in many forms but the form with the most status in a patriarchal society is the heterosexual romantic pair. Most institutional practices assume the heterosexual pair as a building block, a skeletal structure for social organisation. The pair attributes status, enables commercial and economic practices to flourish and gives meaning to war, work, religion, politics and education (Connell 1995, 1987; Davies 1991, Weedon 1987). Popular culture, guilt, desire and dissatisfaction help maintain the dominance of this romantic pair. Patriarchy has a vested interest in the enterprises which the heterosexual couple sustains, has an investment in keeping women dependent on men, in confining them to the domestic sphere and in using aggression, subversion and dominance as forms of control.

Through this chapter I weave a position of positive reframing, by critically deconstructing the web of social, cultural and psychological forces that make and maintain the sexualised subjectivities of the romantic binary pair. This is achieved through an examination of poststructural theory in order to open spaces for emancipatory action. A poststructuralist theoretical framework enables the deconstruction of the dominant binary of masculinity and femininity. It also allows for an examination of the societal markings that these terms carry with them and the associated power structures that assist in maintaining them. This exploration enables the construction of new ways of relating in the structure of the heterosexual pair; allows for the creation of new ways of grouping for living, ways that may allow equity to both members of the pair without fear of repression, reprisal or loss of status. Opening spaces for a wider understanding of the heterosexual relationship allows both men and women access currently not available to a variety of masculinities and femininities depending on discourse and position.

This chapter leads to an examination of the global and social implications of personal change, the potential for new ways of relating, new discourses to inform new subject positions and the breaking down of binaries and power structures. Change at an individual level is necessary for change at a global level and one important site for change is the heterosexual romantic pair. Only through struggling with this current dominant binary and the discourses which produce and reproduce it, and disrupting the inequities, is it possible to invent quality relationships between people that are not reliant on hegemonic versions of sexuality for definition.

In poststructural theory the subject is multiple, changing, ambiguous and contradictory. As author, I assume this framework, illustrating that my voice can never be free of the mediating elements of language and discourse. A poststructuralist approach acknowledges the subject's position in discourse, and makes available the possibility of examination and deconstruction of ideology, discourse and power. From a poststructuralist theoretical framework this analytical approach is applied to the relationship of the romantic binary pair to tease out the structures that maintain inequity. Subjects are constructed within discourse but that construction is able to be challenged and changed. By accepting this understanding change becomes a significant possibility. The writings of poststructuralist feminists Weedon (1987), Davies (1993), Coward (1984) and Connell (1987, 1995) are supportive of these views.

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Position

I present the position that there are two world views of research, after Jeans (1997, p. 3-4). The empiricist world-view holds that there is a stable, external world of objects, events and relationships, that there are absolute truths and that systematic study can discover these truths, where the observations and discoveries are independent of the observer.

> *It is assumed (on good grounds) that one can reduce complex situations to major variables that can be manipulated in controlled conditions...However there also isn't any doubt that when these assumptions are applied to the social world – the world of people and their interactions, they do not hold with the same regularity as in the material world, if indeed they hold at all.* (Jeans 1997 p. 3-4)

The transference or generalisation of such findings risks of ignoring the complexities, the subtleties and the peculiarities of specific situations. This view does not preclude generalisation from the discursive practices that empirical research identifies, but that emancipatory research gleans more fully, as proposed by Lather (1991b) and Ely (1991).

Jeans' (1997) second world-view and the position I take in this chapter, the systematist view, is consistent with the ideas of Lather (1991b) and Ely (1991). This view bases itself on systems and the search for processes that will increase understanding of those systems in what is a more or less stable world. Jeans (1997), after Foucault, maintains there are no absolute truths, that knowledge of this world is a construction, research in this world is a search for understanding rather than a quest for truth and that observations are dependant on the observer. 'Where the empiricist is looking for lawful patterns the systematist is looking for relationships and understandings.' (Jeans 1997, p. 5) This is consistent with the poststructural framework of this chapter.

I have also drawn heavily on the views of Lather (1991a) whose approach advocates the creation of patriarchal resistant scholarship, so we can 'tell a better story in a world marked by the elusiveness with which it greets our efforts to know it.' (Lather 1991a, p. 15) Lather suggests that with research being openly ideological, feminists need to challenge the invisibility of women's experiences, acknowledging the fact that ways of knowing are inherently culture bound (Lather 1991a). Feminists concerned with theorising agree on the rejection of the masculinist subject in history as fundamental to all truth and knowledge. Lather feels that

> *male domination results in partial and distorted accounts of social life. A feminist standpoint, achieved through struggle both against male oppression and towards seeing the world through women's eyes, provides the possibility of more complete and less distorted understandings.* (1991a, p. 25)

Rather, feminists argue that reliable knowledge arises not from romanticising women's experiences, but out of the struggle against oppression and through reflection on conditions that make knowledge possible.

The research position I adopt is based on Lather's (1991a) writing on feminist ethnography, a multi-method research approach. Feminists have indicated that positivist methods skew knowledge in an androcentric or male oriented way (Lather 1991a). Ethnography from a feminist standpoint enables documentation of the lives and activities of women, understanding of women's experiences from their point of view and conceptualisation of women's behaviour as an expression of social contexts (Lather 1991a). Lather suggests that it is important to 'concentrate on the search for different possibilities of making sense of human life, for other ways of knowing which do justice to the complexity, tenuity and indeterminacy of most human experience' (1991b, p. 52).

In Lather's view, the search is for an emancipatory social science, a critical approach where assumptions about power, economy, history and exploitation are challenged to help understand the maldistribution of power and resources underlying society. Also the challenge is to change this maldistribution of power and work towards a more equal world where research can critique the status quo (Lather 1991b).

I also recognise that as an author, I bring a value position to this work. Disclosing a value base in research can be seen to be subjective and non-scientific, with 'a common misconception that systematist research is not as rigorous as empiricist research' (Jeans 1997, p. 5). Lather (1991b) suggests this criticism arises from the belief that all scientific knowledge is free from social construction, a view she does not support.

> *For praxis to be possible, not only must theory illuminate the lived experience of progressive social groups; it must also be illuminated by their struggles. Theory adequate to the task of changing the world must be open-ended, non-dogmatic, speaking to and grounded in the circumstances of everyday life. It must, moreover, be premised on a deep respect for the intellectual and political capabilities of the dispossessed. This position has profound substantive and methodological implications for postpositivist, change enhancing inquiry in the human sciences.* (Lather 1991b, p. 55).

The researcher and the researched become the changer and the changed. 'For researchers with emancipatory aspirations, doing empirical work offers a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that it enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations.' (Lather 1991b, p. 56)

Lather (1991b) suggests that the goal is to move research in a variety of different ways, to enable more interesting and diverse ways of knowing to emerge.

> *Feminist ethnography is consistent with three goals mentioned by feminist researchers: 1) to document the lives and activities of women, 2) to understand the experience of women from their own point of view and 3) to conceptualise women's behaviour as an expression of social contexts.* (Lather 1991b, p. 51)

Poststructuralist theory and research

My work in this chapter is informed by poststructuralist theory which sees meanings as multiple, fluid, ambiguous and contradictory. While viewing subjectivity as shifting and changing and influenced by discourse, I acknowledge that pragmatic considerations are taken into account regarding my position being fixed for the time of writing. 'A poststructuralist feminism acknowledges its own position in discourse and in history and therefore remains critical of its own complicity in writing gender and writing others.' (Luke & Gore 1992, p. 7)

In exploring the construction of the romantic heterosexual pair, poststructuralism is not presented as a place of no commitment or standpoint, nor is poststructuralist theory presented as equating with theoretical indeterminacy or lack of foundation.

> *Poststructuralist feminists do not disclaim foundation – instead they ground their epistemology on the foundation of difference, a construct of difference that extends beyond the sociological trinity of class, race and gender and makes conceptual space for difference in subject location, identity and knowledge's (rendering) such a foundation anti-essentialist and indeterminate.* (Luke & Gore 1992, p. 7)

Poststructuralist feminism is better viewed as a 'determined' rejection of the self, the singular subject and of knowledge that presupposes answers and leads to restrictions and closure, than as a lack of position.

Binary approaches as represented through the romantic discourse of heterosexual pairing pervade daily activities and are central to our cultural and historical heritage. In western society, patriarchal ideology runs as a deep-seated theme – that of the rationalist male and the emotional female. 'Hegemonic masculinity establishes its hegemony partly by its claim to embody its power of reason and thus speak the truth for all society' (Connell 1995). Poststructuralist theory provides a framework for interrogating the 'master narratives' – white, European, male – for examining the silences within these narratives, and has assisted in the denaturalisation of what the master narratives have historically constructed as 'natural', 'normal', 'seamless', 'real' and 'true' (Orner 1992).

While poststructuralism celebrates the foundation of difference, oppositional notions of naturalism and humanism prioritise the binary, and within the dominant humanist discourse this binary is 'essentialised' and constructed as opposite. This dominant view of the binary ignores the complexity and interrelatedness of the terms and exemplifies a mode of thought regarding the romantic heterosexual pair which is inadequate and dangerous.

> *Dualisms have historically been accompanied by the essentialising of both terms and the privileging of the first term over the second. It is essential that we see how the terms interrelate, how they have been historically constructed as opposites and how they have been used to justify and naturalise power relations.* (Orner 1992, p. 78)

This chapter examines the influence that the patriarchal binary of heterosexual romance has on the way men and women are constructed as subjects in our culture. Thoughts and actions become so firmly embedded in the dominant patriarchal discourse that they become naturalised, and personal reflection is required to gain awareness of these behaviours and the power structures that maintain the discourses which sustain the binary. Poststructuralist theory is used as a framework to explore the discourses in order to open spaces for change.

I take the view that subjectivity is constructed in discourse and is shifting, moveable, changeable, and unable to be known or fixed at any one point in time. The strength and power of the dominant liberal-humanist discourse, in which the romantic heterosexual pair is so deeply entrenched, positions the subject as naturalised. The dominant power structures are invisible and not open to easy contestation. From this position it is difficult for the subject to come to an understanding of the constructedness of subjectivity. Through this chapter I work from the position that subjectivity is constructed through discourse and explore how the discourses of the heterosexual romantic pair position subjects unequally.

The process of constructing and reconstructing the narratives of personal histories, which include memories of the past, in order to validate the present can be recognised as a conscious choice made in order to open up the possibility of change. I hold that the construction of the feminine in the heterosexual romantic couple does not include qualities usually associated with the masculine. To initiate, question, articulate, challenge, redefine, lead and reflect are not part of the discourse of the feminine in heterosexual romantic couple. In order to rethink alternative constructions of romantic relationships between men and women, these actions can become a part of an emancipatory discourse which opens up spaces for more equitable relationships.

> *As girls, we should have been taught`the dangers of pinning happiness on the vagaries of love. But while we live in a culture in which our deepest desires are formed in the family, while our hopes for intimacy and personal satisfaction are hooked to the romantic dyad, a great deal more than teaching is required* (Modjeska 1994, p. 50).

Sexual ideology and the romantic pair

The ideals of romantic pairing and sexual binaries are informed through the ideology of sexuality. The role of ideology is to construct the subject through discourse, and sexual ideology has significant influences in western culture. Sexual ideas and practices permeate and shape nearly every aspect of our lives, regardless of whether or not we are conscious of this activity. However, the terms ideology and discourse should not be seen as interchangeable and in Belsey's (1980) view, ideology is not an optional extra deliberately adopted by individuals, 'but the very condition of our experience of the world, unconscious precisely in that it is unquestioned, taken for granted.(Belsey, 1980, p. 5). Ideology is literally spoken in the language of a discourse.

A discourse involves certain shared assumptions which appear in the formations that characterise it. It is not a free idea on its own that manifests itself in words but it is a way of thinking, speaking and experiencing – a way of living. Sexual ideology provides a set of beliefs and practices through the discourse of sexuality and consequently subjects are positioned in certain preferred ways within this discourse. Ideology can, in this way, be viewed as the belief system of the discourse.

Sexualisation of relationships

This chapter recognises that sexuality is seen to be a locus of power and has become a focal point in our identity as subjects. 'Personal validity was, for women, derivative from attachment to men (which is why, in popular culture, pity is poured on the spinster or widow) (Porter 1991, p. 40). Historically in western culture, relationships manifested in marriage were seen as legal contracts to protect and/or provide for inheritance pathways, property, increased power and/or political advantage. Sex was seen as a separate issue, a separate set of experiences, other than for procreation, that for men were usually lived out in relationships outside of the marriage. For women, sex outside of marriage for reasons of pleasure or to fulfil desire was not considered an issue.

The combination of sex and legal, political and social power is a more recent manifestation. The sexualisation of the romantic, male/female relationship has become increasingly evident and the exploration of this sexuality leads to a consideration of the contributions of biology and society to our behaviour.

> *The sexual behaviour we engage in is subject to a large range of social controls: and the desires that give rise to that behaviour are seen by nearly all theories as influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, by social forces.* (Crowley & Himmelweit 1992, p. 110)

A poststructuralist approach allows a reading of this situation where the inhibiting factors in the form of patriarchal power structures can become clear. It appears that women are losing ground and expressions of sexuality exhibit the facets of a double-edged sword. For some women, it may represent a freedom which can be manifested in positive ways, through a freedom of sexual expression and relationship. But for many, the sexualisation of relationship leads to many unwanted attentions in the form of rape, expectation or the negative connotations of being unable to live up to sexual fantasies based on cultural ideals. It is possible to partly understand why women stay in oppressive relationships where the oppression occurs through economics or physical violence, but it is hard to understand why so many women have such strong feelings when it comes to sexuality that they remain in subordinate relationships.

I hold views in line with McKinnon (1987) who advocates that sexuality is the primary method men use to maintain power in a relationship. For men, aggression against those with less power can be felt as sexual pleasure and as sexual entitlement. For women, subordination can be sexualised as pleasure, as an expression of femininity.

'Dominance, principally by men, and submission, principally by women, will be the ruling code through which sexual pleasure is experienced.' (McKinnon 1987, p. 115)

Explanations of sexual discourse

Sexual relationships between men and women are complex and the investment that each party makes in the relationship is for very different reasons and with the expectation of different outcomes. This chapter supports Hollway's (1984) view that gender difference relies not on a neutral difference but that 'different' means 'Other'. In heterosexual relationships, the woman is perceived as the Other, the object of the relationship. Hollway has theorised three discourses of sexual relationships between men and women and exploration of these can provide insight into the positioning of men and women in relationships and the power plays between subject and object, Man and Other.

Hollway's first discourse is the male sexual drive discourse and it appears as easily recognisable.

> *Its key tenet is that men's sexuality is directly produced by a biological drive, the function of which is to ensure the reproduction of the species. The discourse is everywhere in common sense assumptions and is reproduced and legitimised by experts, including psychologists.* (Hollway 1984, p. 243)

The common view, underpinned by a biological base, is that men have a sexual need, they have to have sex, they have no choice. Many women are driven to participate in sex with men because the accepted belief or story that has been woven to promote men's sexual need is that men have no control over their sexual urges or even that physical damage will occur if they are unable to find an avenue for their sexual pleasure. This is, of course, a narrow and superficial view. Men learn from an early age that sex on demand is a right, a given, a 'natural' behaviour, and women or other oppressed, non-hegemonic groups are there to satisfy this seemingly natural urge. Sex on demand keeps women in a subordinate position and when attached to the 'reproduction of the species' argument promotes guilt feelings in women if they don't comply.

The second discourse Hollway identified is the have/hold discourse. 'This has as its focus, not sexuality directly, but the Christian ideals associated with monogamy, partnership and family life.' (p. 243) This discourse, along with the aforementioned sexual drive discourse, constructs male sexual practices. The two discourses, while assuming that sex is heterosexual and linked to reproduction, recommend different practices for men; contradictory practices that do not neatly fit together. To resolve this dilemma for men, they visit the contradiction on women instead. 'Either women are divided into two types (wife/mistress, virgin/whore) or, more recently a woman is expected to be both things...(Men) are expected to be sexually incontinent and out of control – "it's only natural". (p. 243)

The main implication of these two discourses is that women are seen as objects.

> *'Commonly accepted practices of femininity take it for granted that there is status and power attached to being attractive to men. In order to attract them, women can take up the object position in the male sexual drive discourse.'* (p. 245)

However, for women, this positioning may actually be taken up in the have/hold discourse and what men may view as a one-off sexual encounter, women may actually view as entry into a relationship. So the situation inevitably arises where the male operates from within the sexual drive discourse and the female, though complying with the male's physical demands operates from the have/hold discourse. 'Consumer culture is best supported by markets made up of sexual clones, men who want objects and women who want to be objects, and the object desired ever changing, disposable and dictated by the market'. (Wolf, 1990:144). Having learnt that sexual desire for women is taboo, that male pleasure is privileged and that love is sex, it is no wonder that men and women are positioned in two opposing discourses when they come together in the construct of the romantic pair.

The third discourse identified by Hollway (1984) is the permissive discourse. In this discourse, sexuality appears as entirely natural and challenges the principal of monogamy.

> *It takes the individual as the locus of sexuality rather than looking at it in terms of a relationship. It differs from the male sexual drive discourse in one important respect; it applies the same assumptions to women as to men.* (p. 246)

It may in principle be gender blind but the effects of this discourse are actually contradictory for women. Even though theoretically women have the same access to sexual promiscuity as men, because they are subjects embedded in a social discourse, most women find the consequences of the promiscuous discourse unfulfilling (Hollway, 1984).

Supporting this theoretical view is the work of Haste (1993), examining the images of women as they may be positioned within this sexual discourse – as wife, as whore, as waif and finally as witch. These images present women with mechanisms for coping with sexuality.

Hollway's (1984) three discourses, supported by the work of Haste (1993) indicate the existence of the double standard in sexuality – a term which applies to virtually all relationships between the opposites in a binary pair. One of the pair is privileged over the other. Men position themselves in society in such a way that having sex without the ties of a relationship can easily be accepted. As most women position themselves to expect more from the sexual act than physical pleasure they usually have a greater investment in promiscuity than men.

> *The heterosexual woman is sexualised in a way that a heterosexual man is not. The 'double standard' permitting promiscuous sexuality to men and forbidding it to women has nothing to do with a greater desire on the part of men; it has everything to do with greater power.* (Connell 1987, p. 113)

Sex, relationship and the beauty myth

The essentialist view (which I dismiss) holds that women and men have a basic natural instinct to pair in order to procreate and that this 'natural' instinct explains why 'women collude with men in keeping to predictable male and female roles' (Coward 1992, p. 147). Women want to have the babies...it is natural for them to do so. Not only are women's desires shaped to embrace motherhood but they are being compelled to become more and more preoccupied with the way they look in a sexual context. Women still value their desirability, their ability to elicit a sexual response as their greatest power.

> *Not only is a woman's greatest power still seen as sex, but that sexual power is still essentially passive, courting the approval and the response of men. And with the increasing sexualisation of culture, a woman is under contradictory pressures: she is still essentially a passive subject, yet she is expected more and more to be defined by her ability to provoke and satisfy a sexual response in men.* (Coward 1992, p. 160)

This moral and religious basis for marriage has been sacrificed for a sexual basis to relationships.

> *The shift from a moral to a sexual marriage is following men's desires, not women's. Not only have (women) accepted the increasing sexualisation of their world – of motherhood, of working life, of old age – but they appear to have accepted it as an inevitable part of female desire.* (Coward 1992, p. 163)

The increasing sexualisation of western society or 'beauty pornography' means that for the first time women have a vision against which they can be measured, and that female sexual pleasure is intricately connected to scrutiny of the female body in the minutest detail (Wolf 1990).

The public sexualisation of relationships combined with a recent social trend towards disclosure on a public basis has led to women bearing the burden and responsibility for the sexualisation of the heterosexual romantic relationship. This is ably illustrated by the widespread use of the problem page in women's magazines. Sexuality has been elevated and is under a 'discursive injunction' according to Coward (1984), which encourages women to tell all and to speak their feelings about their sexuality: 'While men are incited to more and more complicated forms of sexual technique, women are incited to shoulder the weight of sexual consciousness'. (Coward 1984, p. 139)

When/if the relationship fails, it is women who search for the answers.

Body versus social practise

The discourses in which women and men are positioned give existence to sexuality, subjectivity, and identity. They are produced in language and implemented across our society and it is necessary to see them in the light of the way knowledge and power are produced. However much women speak their relationships to the outside world, encouragement to move out into the social and political arena is not forthcoming. This continued and increasing emphasis on sexuality actually supports patriarchy and male expressions of sexuality encouraging the belief that this is the most important area in a relationship.

The view perpetuated by the dominant patriarchal discourse is that women are encouraged to concentrate wholly on achieving the preferred state in romantic heterosexual relationships, making sure that they are part of a fulfilling sexual relationship, rather than concentrate on pursuing admission to the boardroom.

'Foucault views the female body as representing the production of knowledge and pleasure for control and discipline of families and whole populations. 'Heterosexuality is itself a compulsory set of relations produced not at the level of the body, but at the level of discourse and social practice, a compulsory sexuality that enables male dominance and refuses autonomous solidarity among women' (Martin 1988, p. 281). For feminists, the creation of supports for relationships other than those allowed by the ruling hegemony, i.e. the standard heterosexual, nuclear family, is all important. This can take the form of lesbian, homosexual or friendship relationships. I find it interesting to note however, that as a society virtually no time is devoted to the foregrounding of the bisexual relationship and it is even harder for many people to come to terms with than the homosexual relationship. Homosexual relationships can be neatly perceived by some as a dysfunction of the natural order or poor role socialisation in childhood. However, it is hard to place a label on a person who can comfortably inhabit both heterosexual and homosexual discourse at the same time. This chapter illustrates that the ability to do this provides a disruption to the liberal humanist view of natural and truthful knowledge and as such, it is ignored and silenced, rather than being addressed for the possibilities it may have to offer relating in our world (Martin 1988).

However, I write this as more than just a call to accept lesbian or homosexual alternatives. 'Ultimately, such shifts threaten that "bedrock of resistance" of which Foucault has spoken...and undermine the structures on which contemporary power alignments and their solidity depend' (Martin 1988, p. 281). The formation of this version of sexual ideology in our present culture has arisen to provide particular terms of reference for sexuality and desire that promote and support the patriarchal order in response to innate desires that are already in place. More recently, the eroticising of social values presents images that show women as objects or show degradation as erotic. Wolf (1990) feels that this has arisen to counteract the recent self-assertion of women. The images that are currently flooding the market 'act to keep men and women apart, wherever the restraints of religion, law and economics have grown too weak to continue their work of sustaining the sex war' (Wolf 1990, p. 142).

Through my writings in this chapter I reject the view that the attraction between men and women is innate or natural. Through the use of poststructural theory, I propose that sexual attraction is a highly developed construct which serves the political and social institutions of the time; that moulds choices to ensure the continuation of power structures inherent in these institutions. Sexuality and the dominant discourses through which sexual ideology is expressed maintains the need to be attractive and to attract through the sexualisation of desire, pleasure and guilt.

Challenging the discourse of heterosexual romance

I suggest, in line with the work of Weedon (1987) that before considering the creation of new discursive ways of being, a first step to social and cultural change is the possibility of change within current discourse. Weedon suggests the need to be consciously aware of the contradictory nature of femininity and the position held as subject within discourse. Through this awareness women (and men) may come to see the possibility of political choice between the different modes of femininity and the discourses in which these modes are embedded.

> *Yet even where feminist discourse lacks the social power to realise their versions of knowledge in institutional practices, they can offer the discursive space from which the individual can resist dominant subject positions...Resistance to the dominant at the level of the individual subject is the first stage in the production of alternative forms of knowledge or where such alternatives already exist, of winning individuals over to these discourses and gradually increasing their social power.* (Weedon 1987, p. 110 – 111)

Weedon (1987) feels that neither liberal nor radical feminist's attempts to define women's nature once and for all are enough for the poststructuralist feminist. In poststructuralist feminism, biological difference is never finally fixed, with attention being paid to the historicity of subject positions which are a discursive contest over meaning and a site of patriarchal power play. 'An understanding of how discourses of biological sexual difference are mobilised, in a particular society, at a particular moment, is the first stage in intervening in order to initiate change'. (Weedon 1987, p. 135)

> *I find that Belsey (1980) and Porter (1991) provide a pragmatic and realistic view to change and the future. Belsey (1980) writes: Ideology interpellates concrete individuals as subjects...Popular psychology and popular sociology make individual behaviour a product of these essences...In these circumstances, how is it possible to suppose that, even if we could break in theoretical terms with the concepts of the ruling ideology, we are ourselves capable of change and therefore capable both of acting to change social formation and of transforming ourselves to constitute a new kind of society.* (Belsey 1980, p. 64)

Porter, on an even more positive note states:

> *when children have a qualitatively and quantitatively balanced proportion of time from a significant male and a significant female, both of whom practice autonomy in the private and public spheres, interdependence and loving nurture, then the conventional stereotypes and dualism are being eroded in a more conspicuous manner than a claim to female unique relations can call on.* (Porter 1991, p. 43)

The writing of Porter (1991) and Belsey (1987) reworks the romantic heterosexual pair into a new pragmatic structure which I seek to present as an erosion of the more conventional stereotypes of the liberal humanist discourse.

I believe that if the future is to be different to the present, thinking needs to be more diverse and flexible than the 'common sense' thought that represents the dominant patriarchal discourse of western culture. For change to occur attempts must be made to locate the area where the reproduction of current gender norms can be interrupted and social change promoted. The romantic, heterosexual relationship is one of these sites where the 'circle of reproduction of gender difference involves two people whose historical positioning, and the investments and powers this has inserted into subjectivity, complement each other' (Hollway 1984, p. 270)

Hollway (1984) suggests that it is through contradictions in people's desires that there may be grounds for interrupting the status quo. Through social change, alternative discourses may be developed which can be used by women to bring a different picture to both femininity and masculinity. Discourses can be developed which are resistant, which allow subjects to read against the grain of the hegemonic discourses of the time. However, Hollway (1984) offers a word of caution.

> *Consciousness-changing is not accomplished by new discourses replacing old ones. It is accomplished as a result of the contradictions in our positioning, desires and practices – and thus in our subjectivities – which result from the coexistence of the old and the new. Every relation and every practice to some extent articulates such contradictions and therefore is a site of potential change as much as it is a site of reproduction.*
> (Hollway 1984, p. 271)

The present moment is not a culmination but a point of choice. It is 'no more a historically necessary development than any of our possible futures is.' (Connell 1987, p. 278).

To conclude

This chapter supports, and has tried to represent, the poststructuralist view which encourages a fluidity and multiplicity of thinking and which does not set out to provide answers, reveal cold hard facts, or act as a prior source of knowledge and truth. Mapping a path and providing answers does not fit with the poststructural theoretical basis of this chapter. Rather, the aim is to explore the possibility of creating new opportunities to explore the construction of subjectivity and in the process come to understand the power structures that fetter and constrain, the structures that provide for liberation and the processes that will provide for the development of liberatory structures through discourse.

I have attempted to open dialogue on gender issues, in particular those of sexuality, for debate and investigation. Through engagement with this chapter, it is hoped that some readers will find themselves rethinking or reshaping their views on participation in the romantic male/female binary.

Poststructuralist theory provides the framework to understand the subjectification and construction of the person in discourse and how 'practice can be turned against what constrains it (such that structure can become) the object of practice' (Connell 1987, p. 95). Poststructuralist theory can be used to help analyse, through discourse, (a structuring principle of social institutions) where the structures of power reside and the possibilities of challenging the structures that exist in these discourses. 'It is a theory which decentres the rational, self-present subject of humanism, seeing subjectivity and consciousness as socially produced in language, as a site of struggle and potential change' (Weedon 1987, p. 41)

Poststructuralist theory opens up the possibility for a new set of strategies for working with children; strategies which are based on a different assumption of what it is to be a gendered person. Educators are presented with the opportunity to work with children in ways that will allow them to participate on a more equal basis in relationships in the future and move beyond the male/female binary. Davies (1993) advocates that introducing children to a discourse which enables them to see for themselves the discourses and storylines which constitute them makes more sense. This is a far more proactive approach, introducing children to the idea that they don't have to be passive learners, recipients of the culture, making themselves within the discourses available. It enables children to see themselves as fictions, intersecting with the fictions of their culture and able to create new possibilities for themselves and others.

This chapter is written from the position that compulsory heterosexuality, (including the ideology of sexuality) is a strong and powerful discourse, brimming with common sense knowledge and the power of the 'natural' and 'given'. Butler (1990) writes that 'when we can overthrow compulsory heterosexuality, we will be able to inaugurate a true humanism of "the person" freed from the shackles of sex' (Butler 1990, p. 19).

To do this, the binary regulation that supports the structure of compulsory heterosexuality must be broken down. By breaking down this structure, as manifested in the limiting construction of the romantic binary, the multiplicity of sexuality will be free to emerge, to challenge and disrupt the ruling hegemony of heterosexual reproduction. 'Feminist tension is "dual-vision", that is living in the world as men have fabricated it while creating the world as women imagine it could be' (Porter 1991, p. 40).

This small journey has attempted to unpack personal and cultural story informed by the dominant patriarchal discourse of the romantic heterosexual pair. There are spaces in the patriarchal western world where women and men are writing, reading, thinking and speaking a vision of the future in a language of the future, a vision of a time where the deconstruction of hegemonic patriarchal discourse will take place and society will no longer be built on power, economics, conquest and dissatisfaction. I imagine the possibility of a culture where the human spirit is encouraged to continue producing a rich and diverse living experience; a culture where the struggle for equality is free from discrimination through race, class, sex or gender; where children are free from the constraints and limitations imposed by the dominant view of gender construction; a culture where all are free to take up positions in discourses which are still unthought of. Through this chapter I attempt to provide the theoretical opportunity to open up spaces for gendered beings participating in relationships in discourses which may not yet have a language through which to speak.

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Chapter

7

Intercultural literacy: A developmental model

Mark Heyward

Introduction

This chapter reports on the outcomes of a research project and proposes a developmental model of intercultural literacy. The project grew from the author's personal experience of teaching and administering schools in Indonesia. Having worked in an international school in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, for around three years, I was struck by the fact that many of the students there appeared not to have developed the tolerance and respect for Indonesian culture one might expect from the experience, but on the contrary displayed attitudes of paternalism and negativity. Why did some seem to successfully engage with the local culture, developing positive attitudes, understandings, competencies and language abilities, while others distanced themselves from it? As a first step to answering this question, the research project on which this chapter reports set out to survey the literature on crosscultural learning and develop a model which describes how people learn to become interculturally literate.

Research into crosscultural contact and intercultural literacy has gathered momentum over the last fifty years along with changes in patterns of global mobility and demography. While developments in communications and transport technologies promise a bold new world of global cooperation, the reality of widespread conflict along cultural divides suggests a more sober vision. These two parallel trends offer a significant motive for study into intercultural literacy.

The aim of the chapter is to introduce the proposed model for intercultural literacy and to outline some implications for schools and curriculum. In the first half of the chapter a definition of intercultural literacy is developed, the theoretical background to the model is described and the model itself is introduced, and then in the second half, implications for schools and curriculum are explored.

The concept of intercultural literacy

The term 'literacy' traditionally refers to the ability to read and write. Increasingly, however, it is being put to a broader range of uses. Phrases such as computer literacy, mathematical literacy, political literacy, critical literacy, and recently Asia literacy are becoming common place. The common feature in these broad applications of a formerly narrower term is the implication that a background knowledge of an area is required to enable an educated interpretation of its language and symbols. As Hughes and McCann (1991, p. iii) put it:

> *In reading we need to bring with us a background which permits us to focus on and interpret the signs and symbols so that we may go beyond them to grasp meanings and significance . . . In these instances [the broader applications of the term] there is a recognition that we all need to build a background to enable us to understand the complexities of our world.*

Hirsch introduced the concept of 'cultural literacy' into the public arena in his popular book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (1987) and through such forums as *The Atlantic, Esquire* and the *New Yorker.* We can be grateful to Hirsch not so much for the content of his analysis but rather for the debate it has promoted. Hirsch asserts that America's students are culturally illiterate in terms of knowledge of their nation and its heritage sufficient to understand a reputable newspaper, magazine or the classic literature thought to be a fundamental element in an American education.

Williams and Snipper (1990, p. 7) argue that Hirsch's notion of cultural literacy is confused with academic literacy and perpetuates an exclusive American culture dominated by mainstream males:

> *The mechanisms that underlie cultural literacy – specifically, the need for people to share some common ground for communication to take place – are straightforward and not particularly controversial. As far as we can determine, they are accurate. What makes the concept of cultural literacy problematic are the political and ideological factors associated with any attempt to determine* what should constitute the common ground *[original emphasis].*

Hirsch's conception of cultural literacy is confined to a knowledge of the cultural heritage of the USA. In an attempt to take the concept and make it more culturally and politically relevant to other contexts, a number of writers – particularly in the educational sphere – have suggested specific cultural literacies such as Asia literacy (Fitzgerald 1991, 1997), Asia-Pacific cultural literacy (Hughes & McCann 1991) and Pacific cultural literacy (Willinsky 1992). Fitzgerald (1991, p. 10), for example, proposes an Asia-literacy as more relevant to Australian students:

An Asia-literate person is one who at the end of schooling will know sufficient of the history, geography, politics, economics and culture of Asia so that they may:

- be simply well-informed;
- be confident and competent regional citizens, be at ease in Asia;
- understand the dynamics of the region and in particular Australia's place in it;
- make informed decisions on their own behalf and through national decision-making processes to have productive interaction with Asia.

An effective crosscultural or intercultural reading however clearly requires more than a set of understandings; facts about the history, geography, political and social constructs of the region. While these understandings may indeed form the basis of an intercultural literacy, attitudes of openness, tolerance, empathy and curiosity will also be required, along with competencies in crosscultural communication and language.[1]

To Fitzgerald's list of outcomes I would add that the interculturally literate person (in Fitzgerald's terms, Asia-literate) will have the understandings, competencies and attitudes necessary for effective living and working in a crosscultural setting. He or she will thus have the background required to effectively read a second culture, to interpret its symbols and unravel its meanings in a practical day-to-day context.

Schuster (1989) offers a more general definition of cultural literacy which similarly highlights understanding and action in the world – in contrast to simply focusing on the possession of knowledge.

> *The possession of information cannot be the defining characteristic of cultural literacy. If it were, computers would be more literate than people. The fact that computers cannot be defined as culturally literate drives home the key fact about such literacy: it is a* human *attribute. It is not the possession of information that matters most, but what a person does with that information.*
>
> *I propose that cultural literacy be defined in a manner that emphasises the critical importance of grasping the significance of what is known and using it well. Saul Bellow said recently that culture means having access to your own soul. A culturally literate person is someone who uses what he or she knows about the culture to understand the self and enrich life (p. 540, original emphasis).*

What is required is a more inclusive concept of intercultural literacy. The definition of intercultural literacy I want to propose is one which integrates and builds on the various notions of cultural literacy, crosscultural literacy, intercultural competence, Asia literacy, Pacific cultural literacy and so on. Since the knowledge dimension in earlier formulations such as Hirsch's (1987) is paramount, these definitions must of necessity be confined to knowledge of a particular slice of culture – North American (white, middle-class, male), or Asian-Pacific for example. A broader focus, such as suggested by Schuster (1989), however, does allow for a more inclusive notion of literacy; one in which successful engagement with a culture implies broader understandings and competencies.

For the purposes of this discussion I define intercultural literacy as the possession of understandings, competencies, attitudes, language abilities and identity which enable effective engagement with a second culture. Learning to be interculturally literate can then be said to be learning how to live well in – or with – a culture other than one's primary or 'native' culture.

Certain of these understandings, competencies, attitudes, language abilities and aspects of identity may be thought of as generic, while others are specific to one cultural context. The key contribution I believe that this new definition could make is that it is multi-dimensional as well as inclusive. Building on the earlier notions of cultural literacy surveyed it suggests a conception of intercultural literacy which may be applied in any crosscultural setting. It thus allows for the increasingly complex cultural flows and growing global cultural interdependence that characterise the post-modern world. In this conception, the interculturally literate individual can comfortably move within and between different cultural frameworks, drawing on a store of understandings and employing a range of competencies to interpret meanings, communicate effectively and achieve personal or group objectives. The attitudes of the interculturally literate individual are open but critical, and language abilities sufficient to the demands of the situation. Cultural identity for the interculturally literate is flexible but secure; and may be multiple. What this means is that the interculturally literate individual is comfortable identifying with a number of cultural groups which may be either layered (e.g. Javanese, Indonesian, Asian) or parallel (e.g. bicultural Chinese-Australian).

Models of intercultural literacy

Given the significance of intercultural literacy as we approach the twenty-first century, the question arises: how can students learn this form of intercultural literacy? In setting out to answer this question, the study analysed a range of models and proposed a new model. Since the concept of 'culture shock' was first introduced into popular discourse in the late 1950s (Oberg, 1958) a number of developmental models have been proposed which describe how individuals deal with the crosscultural experience. While the various models provide a basis for the model proposed in this study, none attempts to integrate dimensions of understanding, competency, attitude, identity, language ability and participation into one model.

Earlier models arose from a range of social imperatives and theoretical backgrounds. Social psychologists, for example, were concerned with the adaptation of sojourners to a foreign setting – expatriate business people, aid workers and so on (Lysgaard 1955; Sewell & Davidson 1956; Gullahorn & Gullahorn 1963, 1966), and more recently with the influence of desegregation on attitudes and behaviour among schoolchildren (Stephan & Stephan 1984; Johnson, Johnson & Murayama 1984; Stephan 1985). A broader societal context arose in the eighties from concerns with the integration of immigrant and minority populations into mainstream society (Hanvey 1986; Bochner 1982, 1986; Berry 1984; Berry et al. 1986, 1992; Christensen 1989). Models have also arisen from an education perspective focusing on crosscultural attitudes and understandings as an outcome of foreign language and culture learning (Kordes 1991; Meyer 1991; Elliot & Baumgart 1995). The study of students in international school settings has also provided significant insights into the nature of intercultural literacy learning (Useem & Downie 1976; Willis, Enloe & Minoura 1994; Gerner & Perry 1996).

Earlier models have tended to characterise crosscultural adaptation as a one-way process within a minority-majority paradigm. Young (1991) describes the...

> *... central* theoretical *problem of intercultural communication . . .[as]. . . that of how it is possible for members of different cultures to understand each other without one culture surrendering its integrity to others. . . Only some theory which outlines, in the place of adaptation, a notion of mutual adaptation and critique, and of inter-evolution, can meet this requirement* (Young 1990, p. 305, original emphasis).

The focus in this chapter however is on intercultural *learning* rather than adaptation. The acquisition of intercultural literacy is thus conceived as an additive, expansive process in which both cultures (or individuals) involved in a crosscultural exchange are enriched, as opposed to the subtractive process implied by the concept of adaptation.

Where earlier models tend to imply that assimilation is the solution to problems of adjustment, the proposed model aligns with more recent theory (e.g. Bochner 1982, 1986) in defining the interculturally literate individual as able to integrate two or more cultures. In societal terms, this may be thought of as pluralism rather than assimilation. Culture is thus for the interculturally literate not a fixed framework for action and belief, but rather, in the words of Appadurai (1990), an 'arena for conscious choice, justification and representation' (in Willis, Enloe & Minoura 1994, p. 33).

Drawing on the various developmental models cited above, I propose a new model for the analysis of intercultural literacy learning. This model is intended to apply broadly among adults in monocultural and crosscultural settings and among students in monocultural national, and crosscultural international school settings. It is intended to describe learning outcomes and, potentially, assessment criteria, for intercultural literacy learning.

National societies and their schools are increasingly becoming multicultural, and globalisation is changing our conception of place and identity in a global environment.

The distinctions between national and international settings are increasingly blurring, and consequently the significance of intercultural literacy to students and others in national as well as international contexts is increasing. The proposed model thus arises from broader concerns than did earlier models.

The model itself is the outcome of a research project which, as indicated above, began with a concern for the level of intercultural literacy among students of an international school in East Kalimantan. The first phase of the project involved a survey of literature in the field. Models proposed by earlier researchers were analysed and the model proposed here is essentially a synthesis and further development of those earlier models discussed above.

The second phase of the research has involved the application of the model to a particular case. The school in Kalimantan which provided the initial impetus for this project also provides the case. During two extended visits to the site over a two-year period a series of interviews were conducted with students, staff and members of the wider community. The aim was to determine firstly, levels and types of intercultural literacy within the community, and secondly, the role of the school in facilitating (or hindering) intercultural literacy learning.

The final stage of analysing the data collected, which at the time of writing is still in progress, aims to determine the extent to which the model itself provides a useful framework for the analysis of a particular case – and for answering these questions. The Kalimantan interviews together with a second series of interviews conducted with teachers and administrators from around thirty international schools in Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand, however, suggest that the model does indeed reflect the perceptions of practitioners working in crosscultural and multicultural educational environments. The table on the following page sets out the model developed as a result of the literature survey and analysis of previous models.

The basic four-stage model developed by 'culture shock' theorists in the 1960s and adopted by Hanvey (1986) remains the core of the proposed model. The four stages may be summarised as: (1) Early positive contact, (2) Conflict or 'culture shock', (3) Adaptation, and (4) Integration.[2] It is the experience of confronting oneself in another culture that stimulates intercultural literacy learning. The crisis of confidence that occurs at the culture shock stage is the catalyst for learning — learning about a second culture, learning about one's primary culture and learning about culture in the abstract. An early naive stage has also been added in line with some of the more recent models and to allow for the young child or individual who has not encountered a second culture (Christensen 1991, Elliot & Baumgart 1995). In the final advanced stage in the model I propose, two parallel conceptions of intercultural literacy are identified to allow for the differing contexts in which the learning has occurred. While both may be thought of as the highest level of intercultural literacy, in the case of bicultural literacy, a crosscultural setting with two parallel cultures is assumed, and in the case of transcultural literacy, a transcultural or multicultural context with many cultures is assumed (Willis, Enloe & Minoura 1994).

In contrast to earlier models, the model proposed here differentiates six dimensions of intercultural literacy. Where the earlier models highlighted different dimensions depending on the context in which they were formulated and the imperative for their development, the model proposed here distinguishes between six dimensions and thus highlights the multidimensional nature of intercultural literacy. By clarifying the developmental stages for each dimension, the model potentially offers a useful schema for educators in the development of curriculum, outcome statements and assessment indicators, and for counsellors in the development of approaches to dealing with the various stages or levels identified.

A Multidimensional Model for the Development of Intercultural Literacy

	Monocultural Level 1	Monocultural Level 2	Monocultural Level 3	Crosscultural Level	Intercultural Level
	Limited Awareness	Naïve Awareness	Culture Shock or Distancing	Emerging Intercultural Literacy	Bicultural or Transcultural
	Unconsciously Incompetent	Unconsciously Incompetent	Consciously Incompetent	Consciously Incompetent	Unconsciously Incompetent
Understandings	No significant intercultural understandings. Unaware of own culture or of the significance of culture in human affairs.	Aware of touristic, exotic and stereotypical aspects of other culture/s. Little understanding of metaculture	Aware of significant cultural differences. Other culture/s perceived as irrational and unbelievable.	Increasingly sophisticated understandings of socio-political and intergroup aspects of culture and metaculture.	Aware of how culture/s feel and operate from the standpoint of the insider. Understandings of primary and metaculture and global interdependence.
Competencies	No significant intercultural competencies.	No significant intercultural competencies.	No significant intercultural competencies.	Developing competencies include mindfulness, empathy, perspective-taking, tolerance & communication.	Advanced competencies include mindfulness, empathy, perspective-taking, tolerance & communication.
Attitudes	No significant intercultural attitudes. Assumes that all groups share similar values and traits. Value neutral.	Naïve and stereotypical attitudes which may be positive, negative or ambivalent.	Typically negative attitudes. Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.	Differentiated, dynamic and realistic attitudes. An overall respect for integrity of culture/s.	Differentiated, dynamic and realistic attitudes. An overall respect for integrity of culture/s accompanied by legitimate and informed criticism.

Participation	No significant participation or unaware of cultural dimension of contact.	Tourism, early contact, honeymoon' period or 'experience of culture/s through texts, media etc. 'Living alongside' rather than 'living with'.	Culture conflict. 'Living alongside' rather than 'living with'.	Increasing crosscultural engagement and development of meaningful relationships. 'Living with' rather than 'living alongside'.	Well established cross-cultural / transcultural friendships and/or working relationships. 'Living in' the culture/s. the 'mediating' person.
Language	No significant second language competencies. May be unaware of language differences.	Aware of language differences. Possible ability or communicate at a superficial level in the second language/s (greetings etc.)	Limited functional competencies in the second language/s.	Language learning. Increasingly sophisticated knowledge of and ability to communicate in second languages/s.	Bilingual or multilingual understanding and competencies.
Identity 'global'	Unformed cultural identity.	Basic cultural identity characterised by stereotypic comparisons with other cultures.	Culture shock may force an examination of cultural identity.	Increasingly highly developed and secure primary cultural identity.	Bicultural or transcultural identity. 'Species' or identity may emerge.

The model also diverges from earlier formulations in that it redefines the 'culture shock' stage as 'culture shock/distancing'. The term 'distancing' is introduced here to allow for the possibility that individuals may become 'stuck' in their development at this point, retreating from further engagement with the second culture(s) and the learning that accompanies this engagement. The theory is consistent in describing the crisis, conflict, retreat and negativity characteristic of this stage (Bochner 1982, 1986; Berry 1984, 1986, 1992). In Bochner's (1982) terms, the individual at this point may either advance in intercultural literacy learning, becoming a 'mediating person', or retreat into cultural chauvinism (exaggerated reaffirmation of the primary culture), passing ('going native' and rejecting the primary culture) or marginalisation (drifting between cultures).

Why do some individuals respond to the crosscultural experience in these negative ways while others progress to become interculturally literate? The thing that appears to make the most difference is the social context and supports within which contact occurs (Bochner 1982). In a supportive social context the crosscultural experience is likely to result in intercultural literacy learning whereas in a non-supportive context distancing may result. The implications for schools are profound. The best known formulation of this extended contact hypothesis is probably that of Stephan (1985). Stephan identifies thirteen conditions for intergroup contact to result in positive attitudinal change, which may be thought of in the present context as conditions for crosscultural contact to result in intercultural literacy learning:

1. *Cooperation within groups should be maximised and competition between groups should be minimised.*
2. *Members of both the ingroup and the outgroup should be of equal status both within and outside the contact situation.*
3. *Similarity of both group members on nonstatus dimensions (beliefs, values, etc.) appears to be desirable.*
4. *Differences in competence should be avoided.*
5. *The outcomes should be positive.*
6. *Strong normative and institutional support for the contact should be provided.*
7. *The intergroup contact should have the potential to extend beyond the immediate situation.*
8. *Individuation of group members should be promoted.*
9. *Nonsuperficial contact (e.g. mutual disclosure of information) should be encouraged.*
10. *The contact should be voluntary.*
11. *Positive effects are likely to correlate with the duration of the contact.*
12. *The contact should occur in a variety of contexts with a variety of ingroup and outgroup members.*
13. *Equal numbers of ingroup and outgroup members should be used.*

(Stephan 1985, p. 643)

The list is not proposed as necessary conditions for positive results from crosscultural contact but rather it is suggested that prejudice and ethnocentrism are likely to be reduced if as many of the conditions as possible are met. In this respect it provides a practical guide for management of crosscultural contact and a theoretical basis for the evaluation of crosscultural programs.

Implications for schools and curriculum

The research surveyed in this project together with the developmental model proposed suggests a number of principles for schools and curriculum. Some of the more significant of these are summarised below.

Firstly, intercultural literacy requires crosscultural contact, engagement and the development of meaningful and need-satisfying relationships. Without exposure to other cultures and the resultant experience of culture shock the individual is likely to remain in a state of monoculture — essentially ignorant of the role of culture in shaping life, and characteristically xenophobic. Within international and culturally diverse schools, opportunities should be provided for the development of relationships within classrooms and through extra-curricula activities. Within more monocultural national schools, opportunities for crosscultural contact that allow for the development of meaningful and need-satisfying relationships should be created. Possibilities include exchanges, enrolling international students, extended field trips, engagement with local ethnic groups and the development of sister-school arrangements facilitated by the use of communications technologies such as email and video-conferencing. Attention should be paid in all settings to meeting the requirements identified by Stephan (1985) for successful intergroup contact. Such approaches allow for diversity within cultures and the development of crosscultural dialogue.

The model is also clear that second language learning will not of itself promote intercultural literacy, but rather, should be supported with learnings in other dimensions: intercultural understanding, attitudes, competencies, participation, and identity. Similarly, crosscultural understanding and knowledge is insufficient for intercultural literacy, but rather should be supported with learnings in other dimensions: intercultural attitudes, competencies, language, participation and identity.

A further implication of the model and supporting theory is that intercultural literacy will be enhanced when study of a second culture is narrowly focused, with the emphasis on developing rich, interpretive understandings of one target culture as opposed to a shallower study of many. Intercultural literacy learning should aim to identify and highlight commonalities and similarities between cultures in addition to cultural distance and differences. Crosscultural images which emphasise the sensational, touristic, exotic and stereotypical should be avoided or critically analysed. The diversity within cultures should, rather, be highlighted. Particular attention should be paid to presenting the target culture in its own terms; to allowing the culture to tell its own stories. Texts and curriculum materials should be developed and selected to reflect this. Those which adopt a stereotypic, paternalistic or value-laden orientation should not be used.

Intercultural literacy begins with a sense of cultural divergence. Crosscultural stereotypes and negative intergroup attitudes should be confronted and discussed in the classroom. Theories of social/cultural identity and social categorisation should be introduced with upper-primary and secondary students as a means of legitimising students' cultural orientations and making explicit relevant dynamics of cultural identity formation, 'fence-mending', prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping. Teaching and learning of intercultural attitudes and identity requires an explicit recognition of the affective and conative — or behavioural — dimensions in addition to the cognitive.

Reflexivity is also essential in intercultural literacy learning. Study of a second culture should be related to the development of own-culture understanding, and meta-cultural understanding or understanding of culture in the abstract. Intercultural literacy learning will be enhanced where learning begins 'at home' recognising the 'cultural capital' and diverse cultural heritages and identities within the classroom, school and local community. Identifying links between the local and global will assist. In international schools, this implies an in-depth study of the host culture, in addition to recognition and study of diverse cultures represented within the classroom and school.

'Cultural capital' is not only strong in 'international' schools, however, and may be found in even the most apparently mono-cultural Australian schools. Researching family histories is an engaging and profitable exercise which can reveal to students their own diverse cultural heritages and provide a sense both of the global and transgenerational links which bind humanity together. Another worthwhile activity for students is to investigate the global systems which operate to produce and provide a common item such as a piece of clothing or favourite toy. Take a shoe, for example, and find out where it was made, by whom, and (for older students) the local economic and social politics behind its manufacture. What materials went into its manufacture, where did they come from, what are the environmental, social and economic considerations? How was it transported, who sold it and for how much? These kinds of questions can be explored, and in the process students develop a global perspective and perhaps their own cultural and political sense of identity in one particular context.

A whole-school approach is likely to be more effective than isolated individual classroom efforts. Commitment to an integrated approach to learnings in all dimensions (including second language learning) across the school with a central focus on one target culture in addition to global perspectives is likely to be fruitful. The values and attitudes of school staff — and particularly school leaders — will impact significantly on the success of intercultural education. Issues in teacher and administrator training, experience and professional development should be addressed with the aim of developing a high level of intercultural literacy among staff. Essentially the same principles that apply in relation to curriculum for students apply to adult learners. Intercultural literacy in all schools — but particularly in primary/elementary and early childhood programs — is also likely to be significantly enhanced where the values and aims of the school are congruent with those of the home. To this end, parents and the wider school community should be treated as partners in the process, and policy and programs developed participatively with all stake-holders involved.

Intercultural literacy may be hindered or promoted through structural and cultural aspects of the school program. The employment of native speakers as teachers of Asian languages, for example, invites the risk of institutionalising negative and paternalistic values where the teachers are inexperienced and under-qualified (as in some Australian schools) or are treated as a separate class with lower pay scales (as is the case in international schools in Indonesia). Approaches to the development of 'supportive school environments' and institutionalising pluralism could better support intercultural literacy and counter racism and negative intercultural attitudes where the institutional nature of racism, ethnocentrism and cultural chauvinism is recognised and efforts are made to integrate an intercultural perspective into planning and implementation of whole-school policies.

The development of competencies in perspective-taking and empathy are essential to intercultural literacy. Relevant competencies may be developed through an imaginative, interpretive, and ethnographic approach to cultural study. Relevant approaches include research, drama, debating, first-person creative writing and study of art and literature. Capacities for perspective-taking and empathy increase with age, with upper-primary students developing significant capacities and secondary students capable of advanced empathic understandings. In 1998, for example, I asked students in a grade 8 – 9 class of Indonesians, Chinese and Indians in a 'national-plus' school in Jakarta to research and analyse famous speeches as part of their English studies. They were then given roles to play in an international conference on the impact of deforestation and forest fires in Kalimantan. Students were enrolled as politicians, scientists, health experts, business people, indigenous land-rights activists, and conservationists from around the globe. The speeches they prepared and the in-role debate that followed provided an excellent example of a learning situation which develops advanced empathy and perspective taking skills along with many other intercultural competencies, understandings and attitudes.

Many of the other intercultural competencies identified in the model coincide with personal and interpersonal competencies already targeted in many schools. Making explicit links between existing programs and intercultural literacy learning is likely to prove beneficial. Specifically, approaches to teaching of competencies in decision-making, problem-solving, goal-setting, communication, self-awareness, relationship development and maintenance, awareness and management of emotions, assertiveness, conflict-resolution and mediation will have utility for intercultural literacy learning. Programs to develop self-esteem and personal confidence are relevant to the development of intercultural literacy. In addition, programs to develop thinking skills will assist — particularly where the links between personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence are made explicit. In particular, programs should aim for the development of mindfulness, flexibility and adaptability, open-mindedness, tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, and a sense of humour.

Reference to research and theory in child development related to intercultural literacy suggests that infants (0 – 3 years) are unlikely to progress beyond Monocultural level 1 in the model; early childhood students (4 – 6 years) are unlikely to progress beyond Monocultural level 2; and upper primary (7 – 12 years) are unlikely to progress beyond the Crosscultural level. Secondary students (12 – 18 years) appear capable of achieving intercultural literacy with increasing chance of success throughout the period (Vaughan 1978; Bochner 1982; Thomas 1984; Christensen 1989; Pitman, Eisikovits & Dobbert 1989; Berry, Poortinga, Segall & Dasen 1992). Early childhood programs should therefore aim at preparing children to develop literacies at the crosscultural level, and upper primary/secondary programs at developing literacies at the crosscultural or intercultural levels depending on individual starting points.

Conclusions

This chapter aimed to introduce a new developmental model for intercultural literacy and to describe some implications for schools and curriculum. The significance of intercultural literacy in an evolving context of global interdependence and cultural identity movements was described and the model introduced in the context of relevant crosscultural theory. There remains much research to be done in relation to intercultural literacy, including the development and evaluation of curricula and crosscultural experience programs for students which account for the findings described in this chapter. The model however, it is hoped, may stimulate some further thinking and practice on what is in my view becoming an issue of urgency for educators both here in Australian and internationally.

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1 Fitzgerald (1991, p10) points out that his definition is limited, 'I have not mentioned languages in this definition. The reason is that we cannot expect every Australian child to learn an Asian language or, of those who who do, that all will reach a reasonable level of proficiency. What I have described here is the minimum requirement. To have anything less will be deficient and hopelessly parochial in a world which in terms of ideas, capital and people is moving faster and closer every day.'

2 In some cases a fifth stage is added for reculturation of sojourners returning home. (See Gullahorn & Gullahorn 1963, 1966 and Oberg 1960 in Brein & David 1971 pp.217-218).

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Chapter

8

Communicative aims of Languages Other than English (LOTE) education:

A comparative study in Australia and China

Yuanfang Yu
Edited by Lesley Harbon

In an attempt to depart from the more commonly researched areas of LOTE* education, the research undertaken in 1997 and described below centres on the importance of learning a LOTE for communicative purposes, especially as effective LOTE learning is now beginning to draw increased attention from government education policy-makers, educationalists and language teaching practitioners all over the world.

This research acknowledges the variety of world-wide language research: studies on variability of second language (L2) learners (Krashen 1977, Selinker 1972); interlanguage studies (Selinker 1977; Dulay & Burt 1973; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991); studies of language transfer (Corder 1983; Odlin 1989) and language universals (Greenberg 1966; Comrie 1981). In the studies on individual L2 learner differences, social-psychological studies (Burstall 1970; Gardner 1985) and cognitive studies (Bialystok 1985; O'Malley & Chamot 1990) are recognised as the most influential theories in L2 research (Ellis 1994; Towell & Hawkins 1994; Brown 1994).

However, such studies take little notice of the actual teaching of foreign languages. Described below is a comparative study of Languages other than English (LOTE) in Australia with LOTC (Languages other than Chinese) in China. The similarities and differences in both groups of students' LOTC/LOTE proficiencies are discussed from social psychological and cognitive perspectives, based on the models provided by Gardner (1985) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990). The individual variables, socio-structural variables and socio-perceptual variables in a broader sense are examined in relation to foreign language policies, curricula and their implementations, as well as teaching strategies, learning strategies and classroom operations.

Examined were similarities and differences in Australia and China between learners' motivation, attitudes and interests, and learning and teaching strategies. Special characteristics of learners and contexts are described in relation to the factors which might cause the similarities and differences.

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* For the purposes of this study, the terms LOTE and LOTC will refer to the specific contexts of foreign language learning.

The study was underpinned by the assumption that affective variables, cognitive variables and teaching methods are the three most important predictors for successful foreign language learning (e.g., see Ellis 1994; Brown 1994; Wu et al. 1993). The necessity for LOTE/LOTC teachers to be well informed about the above variables cannot be underestimated.

Examining indicators of motivation, attitudes, interest levels, teaching methods and learning strategies for LOTE/LOTC

This research was conducted in four schools: two in Changchun, China and two in Launceston, Australia. A multi-site, multi-method approach was adopted for the study, with 132 students in Changchun and 91 in Launceston participating.

The sample of schools was not selected randomly. Rather, they were chosen for convenience of access for the researcher. The student respondents, nevertheless, were selected randomly from the project schools. The participating students were selected through negotiations between the researcher, the respective school principals and the LOTE/LOTC teachers.

Numbers of males and females were approximately the same in the two samples. Grades represented were Grades 8, 9 and 11, with the average age of students in China being 14.5 years and, in Australia 13.3 years.

Policy context

In the language policy of China (NEC, 1995, p. 1) it is stated that foreign language proficiency is a very important communicative tool for the development of international relationships in modern socialist China. Thus, foreign language is implemented as one of the basic courses in all secondary schools and tertiary institutions in our country. Similarly, in the National Policy on Languages (Lo Bianco 1987, p. 124) second language study in Australia has been advocated as intrinsically valuable, with language teaching and learning efforts to be harmonised with Australia's economic, national and external policy goals.

In China, the national syllabus is designed by a group of experts in education and/or language education as a part of a continuum from secondary school to tertiary institutions. The time allocation (such as class hours and outside class hours) and the content in terms of phonetics, lexicon and syntax are well distributed through the students' total education (six years for secondary, two years for tertiary). Furthermore, students' proficiency in LOTC is one of the most important criteria for enrolment in senior high schools or universities. The curriculum is exam-driven. Anxiety arises because of the great pressure of the exam, producing a lack of student self-confidence in LOTC learning. Students' learning strategies are consequently exam-oriented, so the majority of students have developed learning strategies applicable to an exam outcome.

The Australian LOTE curriculum has been designed relatively recently (Curriculum Corporation 1994a, 1994b). At the time of this research, the implementation of national LOTE policy varied greatly from school to school. As a result, the LOTE curriculum implementation and the actual practice are not consistent, varying from one to five hours per week across schools. In fact there is no mandate for LOTE in many high schools even though it is stipulated in the LOTE Statement (1994) that LOTE is recommended to be compulsory for grades 1 – 10. In Launceston none of the schools implement compulsory, consecutive years of LOTE. The consequence is that students' LOTE proficiencies are comparatively low. Though more communicative practical activities are found in the classroom teaching (e.g. ordering food, to send a letter through the post office), the students' vocabulary is quite limited and there is little input for grammar. Thus equipped, the students cannot cope with complicated communications in real life, especially in written form.

Seeking indicators of motivation, attitudes, interest levels, teaching methods and learning strategies for LOTE

In previous studies, data were gathered through interviews or classroom observations or both. However, within the context and time limitations of this study, it was impossible to observe or interview accurately 223 subjects in two different contexts. A questionnaire was devised to add data to that already collected in the classroom observations and interviews. The questionnaires and interviews were conducted in English in Launceston while the translated versions were used in Changchun in order that the subjects would feel confident to reply in their own language and provide answers with spontaneity.

The questionnaire

Although many researchers (see Ellis 1994; Brown 1994; Wu et al. 1993) have acknowledged the importance of attitudes and motivation and their effects on achievement in L2 learning, the most consistent and influential work has been done by Gardner (1985). In particular, the instrument devised by him to measure attitudes and motivation is the most well-known and used in the field. This measurement, known as the Attitudes and Motivation Test Battery (1985), incorporated 63 statements and 20 multiple-choice questions in ten categories about attitudes, motivation, interest and anxiety, to which students are required to give immediate responses. Participants completed a modified survey instrument adapted from Gardner's Test Battery (1985).

The interviews

Twenty students participated in semi-structured interviews designed by the researcher with reference to Gardner's Test Battery (1985) and O'Malley's Model (1990). The interviews were semi-structured, with a number of prepared prompts or probes, and with content similar to that of O'Malley & Chamot. The interview utilised open-ended questions, eliciting students' responses as regards reasons for LOTE/LOTC study, feelings when studying LOTE/LOTC, likes and dislikes, typical classes and perceived importance of LOTE/LOTC study.

Classroom observation

The language teaching observation method used in this study was mainly derived from TALOS (The Target Language Observation Scheme) published by Ullmann and Geva (1982, 1985). The categories are classified into seven groups on the part of the teacher (groups taught, types of activities, content focus, skill focus, teaching medium, teaching act and language use) and four groups on the part of the students (groups, type of utterance, question types, language use).

Data analysis method

Since data concerning the students' language proficiency were not available (because of the different target languages, different syllabuses and curriculum, different time allocation as well as problems relating to the University ethics process), a decision was made to look at specific characteristics of students in both contexts in terms of attitudes, motivation, interest, learning strategies and teaching methods rather than strictly quantitative. Quantitative methods would have been preferable if the variables of the students' language proficiencies were available and other factors such as syllabuses and time allotments could be controlled, enabling the application of correlations between language proficiency and affective variables, cognitive variables and teaching methods.

Students of LOTE have their say

As indicated above, three instruments were used in this study. The survey and interview instruments were applied to examine the similarities and differences between the students of the two contexts in terms of attitudes, motivation, interest, anxiety and learning strategies. As well, classroom observations were used to investigate the similarities and differences between the two contexts in terms of teaching methods or strategies. The students' responses to both the survey and the interview instruments were complex, with the data reflecting the diversity of the students involved in both contexts. Nevertheless, similarities and differences between the students of the two contexts, in terms of attitudes, motivation, interest and learning strategies, emerged clearly from their responses to the statements prescribed in the instruments.

Results show significant differences between the two groups of students in both contexts in terms of motivation. Gardner (1985) distinguishes two motivations. One is 'instrumental' motivation which occurs when the learner's goal is functional (e.g., to get a job or pass an exam, etc.); the other is 'integrative' motivation which occurs when the learner wishes to identify with the culture of the L2 group. According to Gardner's definition (1985), the students in Changchun are more instrumentally oriented while the students in Launceston are more integratively oriented in their foreign language learning.

In terms of attitudes, a slight difference is identified. It seems that the attitudes of students in Changchun are a little more negative toward LOTC learning than are those of the LOTE students in Launceston.

The study found no significant difference in the rating of interest in LOTE/LOTC study, with students in Changchun scoring a mean of 3.58 and 64 per cent, while students in Launceston scored a mean of 3.98 and 69 per cent. This may be explained by the fact that all over the world people have similar basic concerns and worries and thus have universally expressed interests in learning about other cultures, including learning another language. In the 20th century, every country is putting greater emphasis on foreign language learning because this has been recognised as critical for countries now depending more upon one another socially, politically and economically. There is a strong need for developing countries to learn 'critical' (economically powerful) languages. This need is greatly emphasised in the Chinese language policy and curriculum.

However, the difference between the two groups in terms of motivation could not be accounted for unless different cultures, national language policies, syllabuses and curriculum are taken into consideration. In China, the national syllabus and curriculum (NEC 1995) stipulate that LOTC is compulsory at secondary and tertiary level. Proficiency in a LOTC is one of the most important criteria for enrolment at senior high schools and/or universities. In order to further their education, students in Changchun have to focus on their LOTC study, hence a drive toward instrumentally oriented foreign language learning (Gardner 1985).

On the contrary, LOTE learning is not compulsory in many secondary schools or universities in Australia even though its importance is greatly stressed in the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987) and the *Statement on Languages other than English* for

Australian Schools (Curriculum Corporation 1994a). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that students in Launceston who choose to study a LOTE do so out of 'integrative' motivation rather than 'instrumental' motivation.

Although the results of this research are generally consistent with the social and cultural environments of the two groups in terms of motivation, the similarities concerned with attitudes and interest scored between the two groups are at odds with the results of motivation. According to the literature (Gardner 1985; Brown 1994), positive attitudes should correlate with strong motivation which should be intensified by interest. However, it was not the case in this study. Thus, it was decided to undertake a detailed examination of the specific reasons which formed the motivation, specific attitudes and interest which supported the motivation in order to investigate the research questions fully.

Reasons for LOTE Learning

The reasons for foreign language learning play an important part in the formation of motivation and were explored in motivation studies such as those by Gardner (1985) and Hajek and Warren (1996). The reasons judged more important by the students in Changchun are 'to get a good job' (mean 4.36; 84%), 'to pass school exams' (mean 4.4; 83%), 'for future career' (mean 4.19; 78%) and 'not to disappoint parents' (mean 3.97; 66%). The reason judged least important was 'to better understand and appreciate art and literature in the language' (42%).

On the contrary, the reasons judged more important by the students in Launceston were 'to meet and converse with more people' (85%), 'to get a good job' (84%), 'to be more at ease with people who speak the language' (78%), and 'to better understand and appreciate art and literature in the language' (76%). The reasons judged least important were 'not to disappoint parents' (26%) followed by 'to pass school exams' (35%).

Notwithstanding the fact that the students in Changchun and the students in Launceston are closely related in terms of age and grade, they provided a quite different set of rankings for the reasons for studying a LOTE/LOTC. Only one item, 'to get a good job', shared a common ranking. It is logical that the highest ranking item in both contexts should in some way strongly reflect the status of the language learning as important in 'getting a good job'.

The greatest difference between the two groups is identified in the items 'to pass exams' and 'not to disappoint parents'. The students in Changchun consider 'to pass exams' and 'not to disappoint parents' more important than the students in Launceston. This result was also confirmed by the interview instrument.

The students' attitudes to LOTC learning in Changchun are influenced greatly by the exams and their parents or teachers rather than their own attitudes and interests. However, the students in Launceston showed no such influence when discussing their attitudes towards LOTE learning.

The above findings are also closely related to the results of the measurement of attitudes.

Attitudes towards LOTE learning

In terms of general attitudes (both positive and negative) the two groups were similar. On specific attitudes, namely the factors more related to personal learning experiences, differences emerged between the two groups. More students in Changchun than in Launceston are interested in the language, but they would not study the LOTE/LOTC if they had a choice.

The results from specific items are consistent with the results of motivational measurement. The Chinese LOTC curriculum and the examination system play an important part in the formation of motivation and attitudes of the students in Changchun. On the other hand, they also exert great pressure upon the students whose interest in the long term is affected because of a more negative, exam-driven experience they have encountered during the learning process. It is probable that if there were no strict examination system, many students in Changchun would cease studying the LOTC.

On the contrary, the students in Launceston who have not experienced any pressure with their LOTE learning retain a long-term interest in the LOTE. The same result can also be seen from the scale of interest.

Student interest in LOTE learning

There is almost no difference between the two groups of scores regarding the following items: likes and dislikes in studying languages, importance of learning languages, purposes in studying the languages and self-efforts in learning. The differences lie in the final three items:

' - I would enjoy studying a foreign language in school even if it were not required;
- I enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak other languages; and
- Studying a foreign language is and enjoyable experience'.

A greater proportion of students in Launceston than Changchun stated they would study a foreign language in school even if it were not required, professing an actual enjoyment of learning LOTE. These preferences are closely related to their personal learning experiences.

Students relate their learning strategies for LOTE/LOTC

Recently O'Malley & Chamot (1990), among other L2 researchers, have developed several instruments aimed at identifying the characteristics of good language learners and the strategies they use to achieve proficiency. These studies (O'Malley & Chamot 1990; Wenden 1987; Rubin 1981) considered learner strategies classified into three broad groups: metacognitive (e.g., self-monitoring and self-evaluation), cognitive (e.g., resourcing, grouping and note-taking), and social-affective (e.g., questioning for clarification, cooperation and self-talk).

There were twenty-four items on the learning strategy and self-confidence questionnaire derived from Gardner (1985) and O'Malley & Chamot (1990). They present the possible behaviours and reactions to the foreign language learning process, in turn reflecting certain learning strategies. It is generally accepted (O'Malley & Chamot 1990; Gardner, 1985 Wu et al. 1993) that twelve of these items are the 'positive' strategies that facilitate foreign language learning whereas three items are the 'negative' strategies which impede foreign language learning.

It is apparent that there is no significant difference between the two groups with regards to positive and negative learning strategies.

Behaviours of 48% in Changchun and 43% in Launceston are reported in the positive category.

However, if specific items or strategies are taken into account, great differences emerge. Both groups of students listen to the teacher carefully in class, and expect the teacher's understanding or help to correct errors. However, more students in Launceston than in Changchun report active participation in activities and like to ask questions if they don't understand. Whereas there are more students in Changchun than Launceston who take notes and want the teacher to speak more in class. More students in Changchun than in Launceston preview and review their lessons with daily efforts at learning the language.

Students' self-confidence in LOTE/LOTC learning was gauged from students responding to probes regarding confidence in the use of the LOTE: difficulties, pressures in LOTE learning, fear and nerves when learning LOTEs. When analysing this set of data it is clear that there are more students in Changchun who devote more time and energy to LOTC learning than those learning a LOTE in Launceston. However, more students in Launceston take an active part in class activities and feel more confident in LOTE learning.

The above results are also confirmed by the findings of the interview instrument. Most of the students interviewed in Changchun expressed their lack of confidence in LOTC learning. They felt a great pressure from exams and parents, and they viewed learning a LOTC as an unpleasant experience.

The students in Changchun spend a considerable time on the written form of the LOTC such as memorising vocabulary, and reading texts. They are passive and lack confidence in speaking tasks. These findings are very similar to those of Wu et al. (1993) who claimed that the Chinese students tended to be more introverted and lacked confidence in LOTC learning and, therefore, were more passive in classroom activities.

However, the students in Launceston view learning a LOTE as a generally pleasant experience because of the lack of pressure from their parents and exams. Therefore they generally expressed their full confidence in LOTE learning, paradoxically spending less time on this task. The students typically reported LOTE learning to be a pleasant experience. On the one hand, they have experienced no pressure from exams or their teachers or parents. On the other hand, the teacher has provided an interesting environment in which the students have fun when learning the language.

However, it is also indicated that the language learnt is generally simple. The vocabulary is generally concerned with daily life, such as names of objects and descriptors, and considerable time is spent on activities such as singing and listening to music. In similar grades in Changchun, the teacher has already presented to the students lengthy simplified texts about, for example, Albert Einstein's life, or the Titanic.

Teaching methods for LOTE/LOTC education

Seven language classes participated in this study; three in Changchun and four in Launceston. The researcher observed one in Changchun and one in Launceston regularly for three weeks, making observations, tallies and notes, observing other classes only occasionally, with the intent of gathering general impressions. Therefore the findings reported here are concerned with one class in each of the two contexts for the sake of comparison.

In LOTC classes in Changchun the teacher read the text to the whole class, with explanations of main grammatical points, and with questions occasionally directed to the whole class. The students were often asked to translate sentences and occasionally asked to analyse sentences to show whether they had understood certain structures. Open-ended, communicative activities were not observed.

Two common features were found in the classes observed in Launceston. The teacher used the LOTE more often than the Changchun teacher used the LOTC. As well, class organisation was different, the researcher observing group practice and role-play. Students worked in groups, with ample chance to practise the LOTE. The students could express their own ideas based on the text or the teacher's instructions, but more silent time was observed because of hesitation and confusion. The students were more active than the students in Changchun. Also, the teacher used different materials, such as the textbook and video-tape. Thus, the group in Launceston reflected certain characteristics of the communicative approach although mother tongue was often used for classroom management purposes.

The teaching and learning of LOTEs for communicative purposes

This study shows that there are both similarities and differences between the Australian and the Chinese groups in terms of motivation, attitudes, interest, self-confidence, learning strategies and teaching methods. Motivationally, students in Changchun are more instrumentally oriented while students in Launceston are more integratively oriented. The results of attitudes and interest are correlated with the findings of motivation. Despite the similarities in general attitudes to, and interest in, LOTE/LOTC learning between the two groups, more students in Launceston tend to be interested in the language learning. However, students in Changchun learn a LOTC because of external influence and pressure rather than from their personal interest. The students in Changchun devote more time and energy to the LOTC learning, while the students in Launceston show greater interest in the language learning, exhibiting a willingness to learn, yet spending less time on this task. Furthermore, the majority of students in Changchun indicate that they lack self-confidence, whereas more students in Launceston show a higher level of self-confidence in LOTE learning.

Some differences emerged regarding specific learning strategies among students. More students in Launceston tend to use self-monitoring, self-evaluation questioning for clarification, while the students in Changchun prefer the strategies of note-taking, transferring and practising. The students in Launceston who view communicative competence as most important take an active part in activities in class, enjoying group learning, whereas the students in Changchun are reluctant to be involved in classroom activities and choose to listen to the teacher passively rather than be active in class.

Teaching strategies vary. Teachers in Changchun normally use the grammar-translation method integrated with aspects of the communicative approach, and teachers in Launceston implement aspects of the communicative approach with the audio-lingual method. Classroom activities in Changchun are less diversified; content input is more focused, resulting in a teacher-centred program. In the classrooms in Launceston, the teachers attempt different kinds of activities to arouse the students' interests. Catering to the students' interest is much more evident in Launceston than in Changchun.

The ways forward for LOTE/LOTC education: Research & practice

The origins of similarities and differences between the two groups found in the study, of course, lie in the features of the cultural milieu in which socialisation takes place, such as the traditions which influence motivation, attitudes, interests and learning strategies. An important part of the cultural milieu is the subculture of the education systems and, of particular interest from the standpoint of LOTE/LOTC learning, language policies, language syllabuses and curriculum. If similarities and differences between the two groups are viewed from the perspective of language policies, syllabuses and curriculum, important implications will arise for LOTE/LOTC policy developers as well as teacher-researchers.

The above observations can account, at least partially, for the fact that there are great similarities between students in both contexts who show positive attitudes to, great interest in and strong motivation for LOTE and LOTC learning. However, the syllabus and curriculum in China are more rigid than those of Australia, which results in the differences between the students' attitudes, motivation and learning strategies in both contexts. A crucial question for LOTC teachers in China is how to reduce exam anxiety in order to cultivate the students' interest in, and an integrative orientation towards, LOTC learning.

Teachers in China working within the strict exam-driven curriculum should actively reflect on these findings and evaluate their teaching strategies to create a pleasant learning environment for the students. Apart from the improvement of teaching strategies (for example, applying the communicative approach, encouraging the students to use the language), one suggestion is that teachers should attempt to teach students how to help themselves to use the language. Greater emphasis must be laid on the importance of learner autonomy.

In the Chinese curriculum, speaking skills should be integrated into the existing examination content so that the students' learning orientation will be shifted toward the more diverse, global goals, e.g., to gain communicative competence in foreign languages.

In the Australian context, the proficiency achieved is far from students developing the skills to communicate effectively and appropriately in Languages other than English for a wide range of purposes and audiences (Curriculum Corporation 1994b). The crucial implication is, therefore, that LOTE policy should be appropriately implemented with consistent measurement standards. Otherwise, policy, curriculum and learning practice will never be consistent and LOTE learning will be fragmented and will not achieve intended student learning outcomes. Documents of LOTE policy and curriculum have to be well understood and interpreted. Particular language tasks must be well designed and carried out in classrooms appropriate to the strands and bands prescribed in the LOTE Profile and Statement (1994b & a) as a continuum.

In addition, LOTE teachers could attempt to help the students set higher aims and devote more time and energy to LOTE learning. Cultural awareness is important but it cannot be enhanced unless a fairly high level of language proficiency is attained.

The results of the study also suggest that attitudes and motivation relate to other aspects of behaviour which are related to LOTE/LOTC learning. Two of these, 'persistence' and 'time devoted' to LOTE/LOTC study, must be taken into consideration before it can be claimed that attitudes and motivation will facilitate foreign language learning.

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Chapter
9

Assessment: The question of time

Elizabeth Hodson

The purpose of this research was to gain some guidance from practitioners in the field of adult Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) about effective, efficient and comfortable assessment practice. The process of data collection was intended to support this purpose by involving all those affected by present practice and who would be affected by a change in the practice. Past experience with such a research approach (Hodson 1996 and 1993) had demonstrated the efficacy this approach. The inter-staff dialogue and the ownership of results along with incidental disclosures are agents for change that whilst not always painless allow staff the opportunity and purpose for recording important issues. The process therefore becomes part of the purpose. If the researcher also has a stake in the effect of the research upon the participants and their future activities, then critical ethnography, the approach taken here, has added value.

Context

The context for this study was a small TESOL program in Tasmania. There were about two hundred enrolled students. Proficiency levels extended from beginner to advanced. The term 'beginner' here denotes absolutely no English or a little social English proficiency and 'advanced' denotes students who had functional English, some of whom were in the workplace or who were studying with some degree of success in mainstream education, either at TAFE or at university. Approximately twenty national groups were represented in the student body.

Participants

The staff requested to respond comprised ten well qualified and experienced teachers. A few teachers were not involved because the program and the curriculum were new to them. The questions which were primarily comparative over time and experience with the curriculum would not have been relevant. The teaching experience of those surveyed varied between one to thirty years although not all in the field of TESOL. A majority had taught overseas as well as in Australia and had a degree of proficiency in at least one language other than English. Four were male and six were female and their ages ranged between early thirties to mid fifties. All had had experience with teaching students within a range of levels of English proficiency. All were teaching to the curriculum framework of the Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE). Some were teachers of international fee-paying students and some were teaching migrant or refugee students. Eight out of ten responded. Four of the eight provided further discussion on the topic to the researcher. As manager of the program for some time, I had had the opportunity of working with teachers to implement the CSWE since its inception.

Importance of assessment to the program

> '... *the CSWE is used as the national reporting and evaluation framework for the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP). At the completion of an AMEP course*[1] *teachers assess whether the student has achieved each competency by assessing their performance against the performance criteria. Teachers then record learner achievement against the CSWE framework. This information is entered into the AMEP database. The database is called the AMEP Reporting*
>
> *and Management System (ARMS). The purpose of this information system is to allow fair and accurate reporting to and about the client, the provider and the program. The system is used to:*
>
> - *generate a record of achievement for the AMEP client*
> - *allow the provider to report on local program outcomes*
> - *allow the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) to report on national program outcomes and to determine funding requirements* (Feez 1998).'

A brief consideration of these expectations of the assessment practice associated with the CSWE makes it quite obvious why assessment has played such a prominent role in implementation of this curriculum. As a consequence assessment has dominated professional development discussion over the past six years. The focus of this discussion has varied in a seesawing fashion between task design and moderation of student texts. The weights which influenced the direction of the seesaw were primarily a mixture of staff familiarity with the curriculum framework and changes to the framework. Staff changes affected the degree of familiarity and so the movement was not a simple one up and then down. In those precious moments of staff stability and confidence collegiate discussion decides the focus. Most recently there has been a growing number of requests to have professional development focused on the theoretical underpinning of the CSWE and TESOL approaches to teaching. There is some feeling that the professional development diet has been unbalanced leading to starvation of those subjects which can enliven and inform teaching practice.

Research Methodology

The research approach for this study as noted in paragraph one above is critical ethnography. The characteristics of this approach are detailed in a paper by Smyth (1994) that I found inspirational because improvement in practice was central to its aim. The immediacy of the change and the control this offered teachers, seemed an attractive way of encouraging teachers to become involved in the process. The year the research was done had been particularly difficult. Professional development of the kind that encouraged critical reflection or sharing of practice had been minimal. Any spare teacher time was absorbed by major structural changes in the TAFE of which this program was part. Certain characteristics of the approach as described by Smyth had particular appeal for me as both the researcher and the manager of the program being investigated. Some aspects of this approach were selected because of the limited nature of this study.

> *'The starting point (in a critically informed approach to educational research)*[2] *has to be the proposition that "educational research is an ethical and political act" (Roman & Apple, 1990, p.41). To put it in its most direct form:*
>
> *Because forms of oppression by gender, class, race, sexual orientation, and age are structured into the very warp and weft of our society, to study schooling is not simply to inquire into an assemblage of neutral institutions whose role is to pass on "the common culture". It is to see schools as places that were and are formed out of cultural, political, and economic conflicts and compromises ... [E]ducational inquiry [is therefore] an ethical and political act that is strongly connected to conflicts over knowledge, resources, and power outside as well as inside of education, even when its practitioners wish otherwise ... [Research is] not [therefore] simply the "neutral" collection, analysis, and reportage of data* (Roman & Apple, 1990, pp.41-2 in Smyth 1994 p.4).'

The sample size was in any case too small to attempt to draw any conclusions based on statistics but as researcher and manager of the program being investigated, I preferred the approach used because by being overtly political, it allows one to consider, rather than mask, the influences that affect results. These are not part of the picture in quantitative approaches that claim to be "disinterested research" (ibid, p.4). This approach also allows for anecdotal accounts. These present a perception that might be rejected by others in the context but which still has a place and weight because of their effect upon activities within the culture described. In any education setting, every perception adds to the total sum of forces which act upon the meanings constructed through inter staff dialogue and resulting management strategies.

Smyth summarises the approach by citing Smith (1993 p.4)

> *'... [T]he essence of critical research ... [is that it is] openly ideological – that is it is value-based and not benign, socially critical – that is it seeks to unmask dominant viewpoints, overtly political – that is it aims to bring about change and emancipatory in orientation – that is its starting point is groups who are oppressed or marginalised.'*

The principal tool used in this study was a questionnaire. As usual with such questionnaires, anonymity was offered but within such a small community such an idea is a nonsense. A few teachers wrote their name on the top of their responses but even those who did not, volunteered comments upon their view in the assumption that the researcher, their program manager, would have recognised their contribution. Because this approach has to a small degree become naturalised into the culture of the teaching team, it was possible and comfortable for me to further discuss ideas expressed with the teachers. It was also interesting to learn that at least one of the practices suggested in the responses was in fact being informally piloted by the teachers. For example a reduction in student numbers had resulted in more disparate student groups[3]. The extra demands this student variation in language proficiency made upon teachers had encouraged one teacher to 'advertise' her test time table so that teachers who needed to assess similar competencies could share the burden.

Analysis of data

A primary motivation for this study was the improvement of the assessment process for the language program studied and most especially for the teachers. Responses were therefore grouped for consideration under:

- proposals for change
- problems with present practice
- perception of the task and purpose of assessment
- statements of teacher time involved in the assessment process and
- indication of areas of teacher need for professional development.

Student attitude to assessment had been exhaustively collected through client satisfaction surveys, client interviews and formative program evaluation. The teachers' knowledge of the results of these naturally provided part of the context for their responses. There was the intention to circulate the paper in progress for comment. Such a process allows one to check that a response to questions has been correctly understood and it allows the teachers to become part of the progressive discussion. The value of such activity has been recognised by many as a most valuable form of professional development. Richards (1992 p. 11) talks about teacher development that is 'discovery oriented and inquiry based'. He argues a teacher development programme 'is (if bottom up) complemented by teacher input, and both interact to help teachers understand their own attitudes, values, knowledge base, and practices, and their influence on classroom life'. However as time did not allow for this, teachers were contacted individually to comment upon specific aspects. Their discussion was then reflected in the summary of the paper. I have included both questions and a summary of the answers in the body of the paper to allow the reader to be part of the process. The final summary was however guided by the five aspects listed above.

Research Questionnaire

The research questionnaire sought to determine the amount of time taken by assessment requirements of this particular competency based program[4]. It sought also to establish the value teachers placed on assessment and the particular practices in use. As the curriculum has been in place for over six years now and as some teachers have been involved with it since its inception, there was an attempt made to establish the degree to which familiarity affected time on task with regard to assessment demands. The questionnaire required evaluative responses and suggestions for improvement. As stated above under in research purpose, one intention of the study was to facilitate improved practice.

The questions were overtly open ended to allow teachers the opportunity to offer their own perspective on assessment issues. They were also posed in a frame that suggested a point of view derived principally from the manager's observation and experience of past practice with the majority of the team working under the CSWE framework.

Questionnaire responses

The teachers responded very generously. The open endedness of the questionnaire design meant that some effort was required to make the exercise worth while. The variety of responses was such that in some instances it will be more useful to include a number of direct quotes rather than to summarise and lose substance. One teacher lost her form and when it was found, upon her perusal of her original comments added other comments. The dialogue that eventuated was not only entertaining to read but helpful as it suggested another research tool not as cumbersome as teacher diaries but which provides the opportunity for reflection.

Question 1. Could you please write a brief paragraph about the value or otherwise of language assessment as required by CSWE and program reporting needs.

Five of the eight respondents felt the language assessment required was valuable. Comments generally saw the value for both students and teachers.

> *Language assessment is valuable in that it provides feedback for clients, analysis of needs for teachers (useful for input into the curriculum).*
>
> *Clients want to be assessed. Teachers ought to assess their clients and their own teaching practice. Should teachers be assessed? and*
>
> *I like assessment because it can help me to confront the inadequacy of my teaching and their learning. It gives a clear focus to my planning and mostly I work comfortably with it. But, sometimes I think I'm forced to rush things, either to get students through a stage (or part there of) within a certain time -then I'm guilty of letting assessment drive the curriculum.*

This latter comment was the only one that referred to reporting requirements and the pressure they place upon teachers. This was something of a surprise to me as manager because my perception is often that teachers feel pressured to 'get their clients through' either at the end of a term or at the termination of a student's entitlement of course hours. Most recently I was approached by teachers who asked for permission to leave assessment until the last week of term because they believed they could achieve better results at that time. The difference was only a matter of weeks. The office staff needed the three weeks before the end of term to put all the results on the data base for reporting requirements. Time was clearly an issue for these two teachers but did not feature in their observations upon this question. Perhaps there is some recognition that to some extent this is the nature of teaching, learning and assessing and no end point is ever going to be far enough away. As providers are now contracted to provide English language tuition for the AMEP and as such contracts are established through competitive tendering, the link between client outcomes and funding is inescapable. The general education culture is being less coy about this aspect and the perception that measurement of teacher value under these terms is inescapable.

Each of the three responses that did not positively acknowledge the value of assessment within the terms of the question, is interesting to consider. Two of the responses questioned the value of the approach to assessment within the CSWE framework.

Respondent A wrote:

> *I feel the CSWE assessment requirements assess the CSWE program adequately. I wonder though if this is not a bit like Caesar investigating Caesar. Would it be more valuable if the assessment could somehow incorporate, and check on the validity of tasks ..., students' ability to cope in social/employment circumstances?*

The intention of this comment was clarified with the writer. The intention was not a challenge to the ability of the framework to accurately reflect the real world of employment and social discourse. Its intention was to propose an alternative assessment system. Such a system would require students to perform with those in the workplace, social services, public services, and so on. Teachers would observe and assess real life performance with all the variables common to such encounters. Whilst at a glance its implementation would seem to be something of a nightmare to achieve, such assessment could be a way of evaluating the aim of the curriculum. The problems with such a system go beyond implementation. The most obvious other difficulty would be the differing demands made upon he clients being assessed. Interlocutor performance could vary between highly sympathetic and clear to abrupt and unhelpful. In Feez (1998 p.5) six points are listed as a clarification of concepts of the model of language arising from the work of Halliday (1978) and others that provide the theoretical under underpinning of the CSWE. These points are:

- language is a resource for making meaning
- the resource of language consists of a set of interrelated systems
- language users draw on this resource each time they use language
- language users create texts to make meaning
- texts are shaped by the social context in which they are used
- the social context is shaped by people using language.

The range of variables in language within such a model, makes the element of creativity in language production of such importance that it cannot be ignored. This element of creativity leads to the variations which ensure that casual conversation is one of the most difficult skills to master for non native speakers. Not all native speakers find it that easy either. It sometimes appears so pointless, it can be difficult to force oneself to make the effort. The broad characteristics of particular genres are easy to identify but it can never be possible to specify all the elements which can occur.

Another teacher pointed out that 'not all competencies could be looked at from this perspective' and therefore the suggested had both limited possibilities and limited merit.

Respondent B wrote:

> *With the increasing trend towards competency-based training/assessing systems, and the inevitable link with funding, there would appear to be no option other than a formal highly structured, audited assessment program for clients attending CSWE based classes. However, there is also a strong need for classes whose clients don't require formal assessment to assist with job placement or access to training in the medium term (or long term.) (e.g. refugee women with young children; recently arrived spouses of Australian citizens, who may not need to prepare for further training or employment; older immigrants entering on family reunion visas). Also: The CSWE, as it currently stands, does not cater for clients with little or no literacy in their first language, as they cannot make progress with half the CSWE I competencies until they have succeeded with basic literacy training. A much more detailed, basic set of literacy/oracy competencies would be needed for ongoing formal assessment of clients in this category. CSWE based language assessment is of little value to the three groups mentioned above, or to immigrants with low L1 literacy levels.*

This comment reflects the concern of many teachers since the inception of the CSWE in the wake of competency based training. It seemed important to include here because part of the reason for the selection of an ethnographic approach was to allow space for political and social issues. It could be claimed that a competency based framework for a language program motivated by concern for the social good and which particularly involves refugees will be at times alien to the task involved. The issue is again one of time. Language competence may be central to successful settlement but achievement of competence for many will be achieved unevenly over time as many years of experience with migrants and refugees has demonstrated. For some students the approach of the CSWE framework has been ideal and client satisfaction surveys indicate that the majority of clients appreciate and value the approach.

The final response I wish to quote came from a teacher who chose to write his name on his response and clarified further by adding 'told like it is'. He (C) wrote:

Don't know how to answer this.

The teacher had been using the CSWE for a number of years, had taken part in state and inter state moderation sessions. Later answers included comments in regard to program management so to some extent the issue of reporting requirements was responded to though on a local rather than funding level. There were also answers which indicated that the author placed some value on assessment.

I did consider that the question was expressed in a manner which might have been confusing but as no one else appeared to have any difficulty, I dismissed this as an explanation. The conclusion I drew was that the task of responding to the questionnaire was seen as just another duty in an already busy schedule. All other teachers would have had similar work loads and answered as expected by their manager who would indeed know who had not completed the task. The decision to be involved in this project was agreed to at a staff meeting some time before. Teacher fatigue usually reaches a peak towards the end of term and was confirmed as the main aspect of this particular response.

All other responses indicated a high degree of involvement in the questions. All wrote more fully than the questions demanded and some wrote extensively about changes that could be used to improve practice at least from the writers' point of view. These ideas will be aired for staff discussion and if ratified by general agreement, will be implemented where possible. As the summary will indicate there are a number of similar ideas. The response by C above surprised me as manager and was an indication that perhaps there is a need for further discussion.

Question 2. What percentage of your time is taken up with assessment?
Over the next 2 weeks could you please keep a diary of the time, date and nature of the tasks associated with the assessment that you are required to do?

Task	Started/Finished	Date

All teachers detailed competencies or tasks. Each answer indicated that assessment time was taken up with a mixture of task design, practice and assistance with students, marking and recording results and preparing and photocopying materials. Some of the more common problems were the various levels of students within each group and of the difficulty of responding appropriately to each. This problem had been exacerbated by program changes mid-term. Students had been reassigned following the cessation of funding of one half of the program. This had led to the mixture of levels noted above but also to a disruption in the cohesion within the groups that had been formed. All was further complicated by the fact that the school had moved to a new site. The program was expected to continue smoothly despite these disruptions.

Other time consuming factors related to the need and desire to validate tasks[5] by various means. This aspect sometimes involved consideration with students and sometimes involved 'real life' experiences, to a degree to address the concern in Respondent A above. Some teachers spent time testing and then evaluating the procedure with students. All responses indicated that assessment was on-going.

It is not possible to quantify the results as had been hoped as the majority of respondents forgot to maintain a diary and answered in retrospect. Some made guesses about the time taken. The two respondents that did offer a total of hours indicated that in the previous fortnight they had spent between six and seven hours. One of these further indicated that this had increased since the filling in of the questionnaire. End of term was three weeks away.

The form of this question seemed to be produce the most varied form of answers. It was the only question that attempted to quantify the issue of time. The intention was in part to provide teachers with a simple tool which might provide a measure of the real time spent on assessment, to compare with their perception of the time spent. This common time management tool, probably required more time to establish the process and purpose to achieve the hoped for result.

Some sample comments common to a number of responses were:

> *Establishing the assessment program for the term*
>
> *Preparing assessment tasks for competencies 9 & 10*
>
> *Marking 2 reading competencies and recording*
>
> *Comparing old and new range statements*
>
> *Preparing writing assessment*
>
> *Preparing and marking and recording listening assessments*

and

> *X is currently running an integrated work experience related project which offers students the opportunity to demonstrate competency in S, L, R, and W areas. (This project was devised with the intention of avoiding more formal and demoralising and seemingly time wasting assessment program for this class in which only one member is truly operating at CSWE 3 level.*

The impression overall is that despite teachers' familiarity with the CSWE, time on the task of assessment remained high.

Question 2 cont. **Do you believe this time has diminished significantly as you have become more familiar with the CSWE?**

One respondent stated:

> *Yes, absolutely.*

The teacher with the least experience with the CSWE responded that the question was not applicable to his situation but all other respondents said that time had not diminished. Two common reasons given in support of the responses were that the changes in the CSWE plus the need to familiarise themselves with all levels of the certificate as their teaching responsibilities varied meant that no teacher felt sufficiently familiar to have a reduced need to consider in detail each task. This was supported in general by the degree of detail and complexity encompassed by the competency based approach. The following quote sums up this view:

> *No not really – perhaps this would be the case in recognising ASLPR levels but each CSWE comp. really needs to be looked at against all criteria each time perhaps because of the more specific nature of the comp. system and the breadth of the proficiency based system.*

These responses were something of a surprise to me. My perception of the teachers assessment practice over the past six years was that the time had diminished. Perhaps their increased confidence in the use of the approach led to this misconception.

Question 3. If you believe present assessment practices take time that would be better spent on teaching preparation and practice, how could we show that our teaching programs were worth funding?

Whilst all answers agreed in spirit with the single response from two:

> *I don't believe that.*

most teachers believed that outside assessment or other teacher assessment (RATS) would be a great help[6]. Outside assessment suggested that there was a need for greater objectivity which could respondents believed be achieved by using assessors not familiar with the students. In one instance there was the suggestion that the outside assessors should come from professionals from outside organisations or employment placement persons.

Question 4. What if any aspect of present assessment practice serve program management rather than students or teachers?

Six of the respondents felt that the pressure to record outcomes to demonstrate achievement was part of the economic rationalist climate and that the timing of assessment did not serve students well. However one response was:

> *I think present assessment practice is well balanced.*

Another was quite different in tone from all others:

> *I still wonder about the value of CSWE – certainly its valuable for reporting, and students are generally positive about it – but to my knowledge, no employer or educational institution has ever asked about it – what use does a CSWE 3 really have to anyone but the student?*

This was a question frequently asked when the CSWE was first introduced.

Question 5. How could assessment practices be improved?

This question achieved almost complete accord in that answers included the three aspects of time, materials and objectivity. Six teachers felt there was a need for more well developed and tested tasks, the solutions for the issue of time included both RATS and teacher release and objectivity is covered above. The teachers with the least experience responded that the whole practice was too difficult and that 'gut feelings' were better. One answer offered a different perspective:

> *I think we need to tighten up or perhaps standardise the way we report to students. There have been several instances of students misinterpreting the results of assessments – e.g. oral assessments when we perhaps say 'You did very well but ...' Students also need thorough orientation to assessment practice at the beginning of their study here.*

I believe the spirit of this last comment is encompassed in the first competency of the CSWE which focuses on learning strategies which of course is culture bound. The task for students interpreting the real meaning of a teacher's feedback in assessment practice is of course very complex and never certain in any area of education.

Question 6. What are the most onerous assessment activities?

Most responses referred to the time required for oral assessments and the difficulty of struggling with borderline achievements. The borderline cases in one instance referred to the stress it caused apparently to the teacher. In two instances, the dominance of assessment was a concern.

> *No activity is onerous. However the comment I would make is that there is no escape from its ever present dominance! It affects my course design more than I think is actually beneficial to content and to student choice.*

Question 7. Can you recall a positive student experience/reaction following an assessment result?

The results of this question were far less predictable than expected. Half the respondents mentioned positive student reactions to success, one referred to the boost to *self esteem and confidence*. One answer gave as a student's reason for feeling positive, the knowledge that she qualified for more English training because her achievement was sufficient to enrol her in the Advanced English Program. If she had failed there would have been no possibility for further formal English language support. Students are well aware of the implications of cuts in government spending on English language training.

Another positive experience was recorded by a teacher who was acting as a "RAT" and failed a student but the student had enjoyed the assessment experience. The teacher's perception:

> *Perhaps this was because it was more authentic (giving personal information to someone that really didn't know.)*

Question 8. Can you recall a negative student experience/reaction following an assessment result.

Two teachers responded that the idea of failure was not given room in their teaching approach. A number encompassed the reverse of the first point in question 7 above but a number of other answers were sufficiently different to be worth including here:

> *Yes – a student who wrote a CSWE 2 report and failed – she complained that she had prepared to write a report about a workplace and that topic was not given. It demonstrated the need to provide thorough orientation to assessment practice and purpose.*

The AMEP is significantly different from other areas of education. The special consideration given to student needs in recognition of the difficulty of their situation is the prime feature. Assessment, however, seeks to measure student performance against common performance. There seems to be an expectation among some teachers and students that assessment for English language, in TESOL, is significantly different from examination of other skills in other life activity. Perhaps the confusion is the result of the part played by pastoral care in the language program for this student group. This thought is supported by the next observation which highlights some of the private and personal issues this student group must face in their struggle to learn English.

> *One male student argued relentlessly that if his wife had passed an oral competency he too should pass because he "had taught her everything she know" (sic). He was unable to objectively look at her language ability and his, but rather focussed on the loss of face that had occurred.*

The teacher added a comment after some reflection that there was a positive side to the certainty of competency based assessment from a teacher's point of view.

> *CSWE provides a stronger position to demonstrate difference of ability through clearly outlined performance criteria relating to the task than having to rely on the student's acceptance of an ASLPR made by an individual teacher.*

Question 9. Is there one thing we can change now to make assessment practices better for Term 3?

The principal responses to this question reflected the answers given in 5 above and that was the need for "RATS" from various sources and a more extensive range of tasks. One different response suggested combining assessment effort across class groups. This was especially necessary where unevenness in macroskills meant varying levels of proficiency were present in the one class group. One teacher asked for more moderation across the school especially where tasks had been in use for a long time.

Management response

The task has been worthwhile. Despite the intended focus upon time on task for teachers managing CSWE assessment, the results have provided a breadth of information about program concerns which need to be addressed. In some instances, teachers indicated a lack of understanding about reporting requirement and the need for these. This apparent lack of understanding might result from the belief that outcomes were directly related to funding. Media reports for some time have suggested that such a connection is the way of the future for mainstream education. Culture is dynamic and as such affects all players. Throughout tendering processes[7], contractual arrangements and associated reporting requirements have been given considerable emphasis. The importance of on-going in-put of results to a national data base had been stressed by management as past practice had required in-put at the end of a course. This change in practice required a system change which gave the process greater prominence than it would have had if there had been no change.[8] The use of performance indicators involving continuous assessment is likely to attract a degree of tension by the fact that it is continuous and demanding in terms of teachers' energy.

It was interesting to note that no teacher raised the issue of possible student achievement as one way to achieve an extension of student hours[9].

The perception that teachers are generally more confident with the assessment process has been borne out even though the expected effect of time saving does not seem to be part of the result. The respondents do seem very confident about what the issues are and for the most part as manager I have no trouble in agreeing with their perceptions. Change over time seems most evident in the consensus that assessment is a valuable activity that generally does not take away valuable teaching time but does inform teaching practice. This is despite the feeling of dominance of assessment in the minds of teachers and the perception that at times it has an excessive effect on the management of content of the syllabus. The positives expressed about the value of assessment are also very different from the sentiments expressed through the use of the first edition of the CSWE. This would seem to suggest that the implementation of CSWE has been effectively supported by staff development. It might also suggest that there has been sufficient time for the change of culture. Frew (1994, p.283) suggests that cultural change in an organisation takes from six to fifteen years. While only three of the teachers had been working with the CSWE for more than six years all had experienced competency based approaches to adult learning. The approach is taken as the norm more often than not and in moments where other approaches are recalled it is more a matter of 'I remember when ...' and perhaps some addition comments on their appeal but lack of direction for the students[10].

Summary and Conclusions

The most surprising conclusion for myself as researcher of a program I have been involved in for a long time, was the teachers' rejection of the idea of assessment as either a waste of time or even of taking away valuable class time. As an observer of teacher concern about the time taken by assessment, and the insufficient class room time, I had expected otherwise. Clearly the value for teachers of assessment as a vehicle for motivation, outweighs other concerns.

The teachers independently achieved a degree of consensus about issues of time which could be addressed. Most obvious was the provision of "RATS". The expected result of increased objectivity and the saving of teacher time especially for the assessment of oral competence, while not cost neutral, need not have significant implications. One teacher suggested the use of trained volunteers as a cost free process for this proposal. The consensus in the cause for concern about time taken to assess oral competencies and the solution, supports both my initial perceptions.

The requirement for a larger bank of validated tasks at all levels is more difficult to achieve. Strategies need to be considered which can answer teacher requirements, yet have minimal funding implications. Teachers' concern about variety in assessments tasks, suggests they are actively engaged in validating their practice. This further supports the seriousness with which they view assessment as a language learning activity. Furthermore the need for assessment tasks to change to reflect increased teacher confidence in the use of competency based approaches to language development, reflects teachers' refusal to see such approaches in a minimalist frame. On-going change and adaptation of assessment tasks indicate a degree of energy and language analysis present in the approach to teaching.

The perception is that time on assessment activity has not changed. Despite experience in the area, it appears that the same amount of time is devoted to this complex area but the time is spent on different aspects. These results reflect the seesawing effect referred to earlier. While seven of the nine questions approached the element of time from different standpoints, teachers' answers focussed on issues of quality. Student perception dominated all but one of the responses. In that one response, students were only mentioned in regard to answers 7 and 8 which did require a student focus. This effectively proved that the questionnaire could be used to focus primarily upon teacher perception.

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1 Teachers assess when the students are ready to be assessed not at the end of a course. This is national practice as proposed in a national assessment forum early 1998.

2 My parenthesis used to connect a prior paragraph from this to this extract.

3 Students are sorted into class groups based on their spoken language proficiency. and an estimate about their likely rate of learning. The Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating (ASLPR) is used. This is a gross sorting mechanism designed for such a purpose. A student with a speaking level of 1 might be 0 for reading and writing or 2. The student's previous experience with English determines such a possibility.

4 Questionnaire questions (1 to 9) are reproduced in this paper.

5 All tasks are put through a validation process but no matter how thoroughly this is done, teachers continue to question validity and devise further validation processes. The process is viewed as and part and parcel of the continuous improvement process given prominence in Quality Assurance requirements.

6 RATS : Common abbreviation for roving assessment teachers. This term was coined by New South Wales Adult Migrant English Service (AMES).

7 The Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) tendered for the provision of English language services throughout Australia in 1998.

8 At a forum held at Macquarie University in August 1998, representatives of the Department of Immigration Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) stated that benchmarks for student performance were based on averages which had been achieved over time and were being used to assist the department to establish what could be achieved in the program. There was a general need to be accountable which required some means of quantifying program achievement.

9 The program allows for the extension of student hours where a client can be expected to achieve either a statement of attainment or a certificate within a specified time. Most commonly the time amounts to a few hours which enable the student to complete a term with their cohort.

10 At a national forum at Macquarie University, August 26, 1998, the benefits of competency based programs and the opportunity they offered to provide a sense of development was contrasted to days when a plethora of methodologies could be used. These earlier approaches were recalled as being part of a stimulating and enjoyable time but were impossible for determining how government monies were spent or what learning pathway students were following.

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Part
3

Adult literacy, assessment and work

Chapter

10

The National Reporting System (NRS) in the workplace

Maree Watts & Robeka Smith

Introduction:

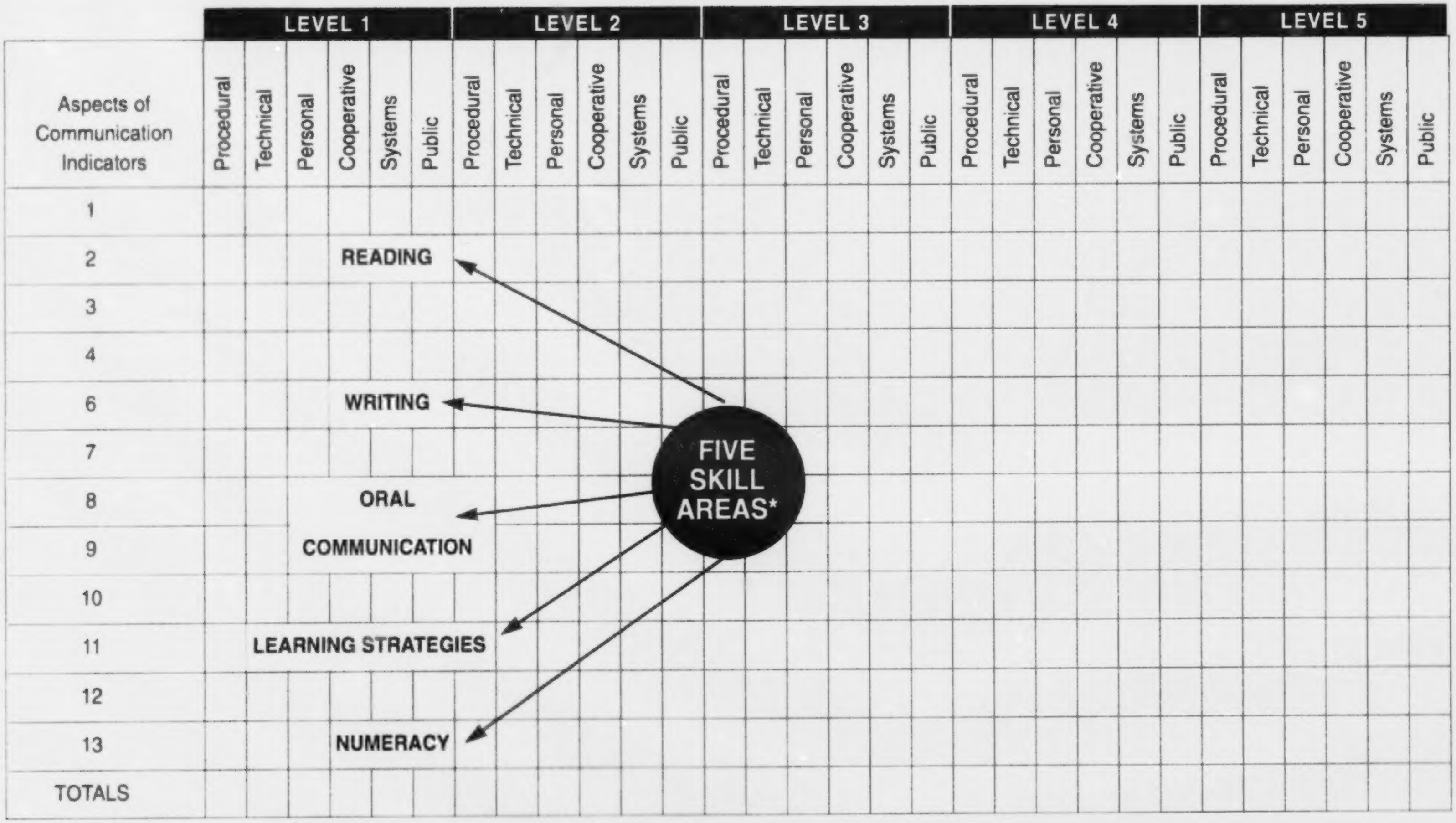
The training environment is continually evolving. Trainers need to adjust their training to keep abreast of policy changes, workplace agendas and individual client needs while trying to maintain what they regard as essential language, literacy and numeracy components in their training delivery.

In workplaces utilising Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) funding, trainers are now required to incorporate a new measurement tool – the National Reporting System (NRS) to report on the outcomes of their training delivery to the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA). This requirement led to the researchers' decision to collaborate and undertake an NRS mapping project. The researchers brought their expertise in workplace literacy training/coordinating and general adult literacy training/coordinating to this project respectively.

The NRS is now the main system that will be used for accountability for language, literacy and numeracy funding. The NRS was designed to indicate the multiple literacies that an individual may have and it is a multi-dimensional model. The following diagram (an amended version of one published by Peter Holden, 1998) helps to explain the NRS. It has:

- five levels of competence (see the top row of the diagram);
- six aspects – procedural, technical, personal, cooperative, systems and public (repeated across the diagram under the levels);
- indicator numbers which relate to each skill area (numbered from 1 to 13 on the vertical axis on the left).

The National Reporting System



	LEVEL 1						LEVEL 2						LEVEL 3						LEVEL 4						LEVEL 5					
Aspects of Communication Indicators	Procedural	Technical	Personal	Cooperative	Systems	Public	Procedural	Technical	Personal	Cooperative	Systems	Public	Procedural	Technical	Personal	Cooperative	Systems	Public	Procedural	Technical	Personal	Cooperative	Systems	Public	Procedural	Technical	Personal	Cooperative	Systems	Public
1																														
2																														
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13																														
TOTALS																														

- The number of indicators for each skill area varies across the five levels

The scale makes it possible to indicate that an individual has achieved competence in a particular aspect of communication, for example note taking, at a certain level. Progress can be measured and it is not assumed that the individual is competent in all areas of communication. Instead, the individual can be said to have mastery of, for example, personal communication at level 4.1 but mastery of procedural communication at level 2.1. The NRS recognises that an individual can be expert in areas with which they are familiar and locate at a higher level on the NRS compared to attempting an unfamiliar task which would locate them at a lower NRS level.

Internal inconsistency within the NRS document also makes it difficult for the user to become familiar and expert in using the system. For example the sample activities for NRS level three do not appear to assess the same skill level. The speaking and listening section for **personal communication** has one activity 'participates in a casual conversation with a neighbour or colleague' whereas the **cooperative communication** section has an activity 'delivers short prepared talk on a topic of interest to the group'. Can it be said that delivering a prepared talk equates to a casual conversation?

The difficulty in using the NRS arises because of its complexity and its purpose in showing that communication skills should not be viewed as a single score but should only be viewed in a particular social context relating to a particular task. Hence a variety of skill levels can be reached by an individual and therefore they may be measured at several NRS levels.

The requirement to use the NRS has had an impact on employers and WELL funded trainers because the NRS is an unfamiliar reporting tool. Very little training on how to use the NRS has occurred, practitioners and employers are unsure of its benefits and are uncertain as to why and how the NRS results will be used by the funding provider.

Economic policy has placed an increasing focus on the importance of training in achieving economic goals. The education of labour has become an essential component in the economic equation and has caused a refocussing on the importance of training to achieve increases in productivity and efficiency. Rubenson (1989) examines the cyclical inclusion of education in economic policy and states how it was important in the 1960's, decreased in importance in the 1970's and then became increasingly important in the 1980's. The underlying assumption then as now, was that there was a positive relationship between 'education and economic performance, and of education as an instrument to equalize the available goods and services of society...' (Rubenson 1989, p.388). Dymock (1993) continues this argument and relates it to government funding priorities. From the 1970's the funding for Adult Literacy training steadily increased to peak in the early 1990's. The increased publicity for Adult Literacy, with the publicity campaigns associated with 1990 as the "International Year of Literacy", caused even more money to be allocated to Adult Literacy training in classrooms and in the workplace.

The increasing importance of training in the economic equation also resulted in the move toward competency based, accredited training and the formation of the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA). The NTRA incorporates competency based training, competency standards and recognition of existing training skills into any training delivery. The focus of training is to produce a skilled workforce that is productive and enhances Australia's competitiveness. The aim of the NTRA was to 'develop a vocational education and training system which is cohesive and allows for flexibility and choice. It also aims to balance the provision of broad education and training and create a more flexible and highly skilled workforce. Such a workforce is fundamental to improved productivity and efficiency.' (ANTA, 1994, p.1)

However, today there are increasing restraints on the workforce due to government spending cutbacks and other economic constraints and the NTRA has changed and is now called 'Australia's National Training Framework'. The focus is moving from increasing productivity, while maintaining current employment levels, to also include cost efficiency and thus a reduced workforce. Workforces are being streamlined, jobs are becoming multi-tasked through the elimination of job demarcation and there is increasing emphasis on workers' responsibilities to each other without the presence of middle management (Harvey, 1990). Government spending which does occur is now subject to heavy scrutiny and must achieve desirable outcomes. Training courses have to be designed and new courses developed to show the learning outcomes that result from training.

Language and literacy training has not been exempted from the changes that are occurring. Since the 1990's the government, at both state and federal levels, has allocated funds in increasing amounts to improve language and literacy levels in the workplace and vocational education and training sector. Reporting tools have been developed to satisfy accountability parameters and literacy and numeracy scales have been designed. The Federal government funded the designing and implementation of rating scales such as the Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALAN) Scales, the Interim Literacy Course Matrix (ILCM) and now the National Reporting System (NRS). The government uses these scales in an attempt to justify the large funding that is devoted to Adult Literacy training through Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) funding, Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) funding and now in the new 1998 DEETYA literacy/numeracy tender for unemployed 18 – 24 year olds. The WELL 1999 Guidelines and Application Kit state:

> *WELL Funding Recipients must ensure that their WELL training providers report on participants' language, literacy and numeracy gains using the National Reporting System (NRS). ....In the new reporting mechanism, the Indicators of Competence and the Aspects of Communication outlined in the NRS will be used. WELL teachers should continue to plan, develop and run training courses according to their usual practice. Once a training programme and its intended learning outcomes have been clearly established, teachers will be required to map the language, literacy and numeracy outcomes of their programmes against the Indicators of Competence in the NRS* (DEETYA 1999, p.9).

And again in the 18-24 year old tender document the kit specifies:

> *A successful outcome is defined as being either:*
>
> *at the minimum, progression to the next NRS level in all Indicators of Competence for one of the Reading, Writing or Numeracy macro skills together with progression to the next NRS level in at least one Indicator of Competence for each of two of the Reading, Writing or numeracy macro skills;*
>
> *or*
>
> *the job seeker attains full time employment for a period of not less than six weeks* (DEETYA 1998, p.16).

Accredited Training and the NRS

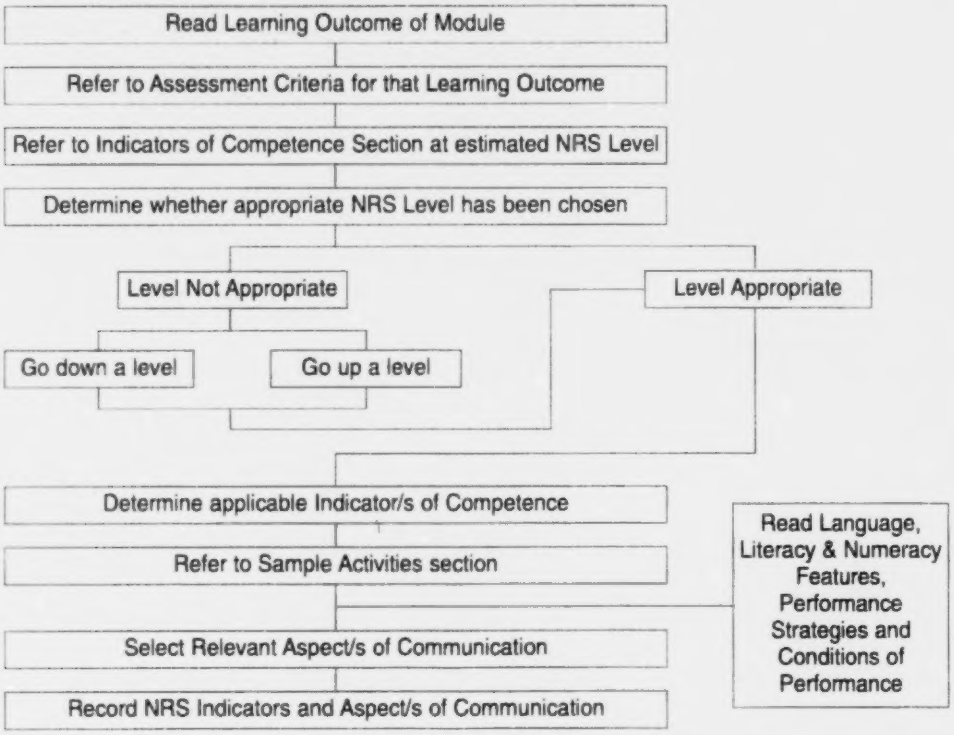
Despite difficulties with the NRS it is still the best reporting system available to funding providers who wish to have some method to track the outcomes which result from the money that has been spent on language and literacy training.

Problems arise because workplace language and literacy trainers need to deliver courses which are not written in NRS language and literacy terminology. The workplace employer is interested in workers achieving certain outcomes related to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). These outcomes cannot be readily mapped to the NRS. However, for the purpose of funding accountability, DEETYA is not interested in receiving AQF outcomes but requires NRS outcomes. Some of these AQF learning outcomes and their assessment criteria can be related to the sample activities for each level of the NRS but they are not expressed in terms that enable them to be readily related to the indicators of competence.

It would facilitate WELL funded training and other programs which require outcomes to be mapped to the NRS if accredited training could be mapped to the NRS. According to the WELL 1999 Guidelines and Application Kit, '...Once a training programme and its intended learning outcomes have been clearly established, teachers will be required to map the language, literacy and numeracy outcomes of their programmes against the Indicators of Competence in the NRS' (DEETYA 1999, p.9).

The WELL Guidelines imply that mapping to the NRS can occur prior to the delivery of any training. To illustrate the possible applications and challenges of the NRS, this project has attempted to undertake a mapping process for the TCF Communication module of Textile Production Certificate I. The process that was used to map the TCF Communication module is illustrated on the following flow chart (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: How to Determine NRS Levels for Accredited Courses


Read Learning Outcome of Module
Refer to Assessment Criteria for that Learning Outcome
Refer to Indicators of Competence Section at estimated NRS Level
Determine whether appropriate NRS Level has been chosen
Level Not Appropriate
Level Appropriate
Go down a level
Go up a level
Determine applicable Indicator/s of Competence
Refer to Sample Activities section
Select Relevant Aspect/s of Communication
Record NRS Indicators and Aspect/s of Communication
Read Language, Literacy & Numeracy Features, Performance Strategies and Conditions of Performance

Mapping of Learning Outcomes/Assessment Criteria to the NRS

Using the flow chart sequence, TCF Communication I was mapped to the NRS using Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria. Figure 2 illustrates the results from this exercise:

Fig. 2: Mapping of Learning Outcomes/Assessment Criteria to the NRS

TCF COMMUNICATION I: TEXTILE PRODUCTION CERTIFICATE

Aspects: *Procedural / Technical / Personal / Cooperative / Systems / Public*

Learning Outcome	NRS Indicator	Aspect/s of Communication					
1. Use listening and speaking skills needed to carry out work function		Pr	T	Pe	C	S	Pu
• follow and interpret simple spoken instructions	2.5 – 2.7						
• use simple enterprise terminology	2.5 – 2.7						
• alert others to machine faults and/or quality issues	2.5 – 2.7 2.9 – 2.10						
• identify and describe faults in workplace materials & products	2.5 – 2.7 2.9 – 2.10						
• make requests in order to carry out work	2.5 – 2.7 2.9 – 2.10						
2. Recognise & interpret a range of simple enterprise information		Pr	T	Pe	C	S	Pu
• interpret simple enterprise documents	2.1 – 2.2 2.9 – 2.12						
• check materials against simple instructions/specifications	2.1 – 2.2 2.9 – 2.12						
• follow symbols and diagrams for familiar enterprise procedures	2.1 – 2.2 2.9 – 2.12						
3. Complete simple enterprise forms and records		Pr	T	Pe	C	S	Pu
• fill in simple enterprise forms	2.3 – 2.4 2.9 – 2.12						
• complete simple production records	2.3 – 2.4 2.9 – 2.12						
• participate in small informal work groups	2.6						

The mapping process highlighted the fact that determining a linkage between Learning Outcomes and the NRS is a relatively simple but not necessarily reliable process. The issues that arose are listed in the following figure:

Fig. 3: Mapping Learning Outcomes of an Accredited Course or Module to the NRS

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Relatively simple process to align Learning Outcomes and hence trainees to an NRS level/s. • Translation documents can be readily set up. • Reporting to the NRS is required in order to fulfil funding requirements.	• A Learning Outcome is comparative to the Sample Activities contained in the NRS. It does not provide the comprehensive detail required to provide a valid NRS report. • A generalised mapping of a course delivered does not satisfy NRS reporting requirements. It is also not accurate to assume that a specific AQF Level equates to only one specific NRS Level. For example, AQF 1 does not necessarily equal NRS 3. • Additional information is provided to employers which is more comprehensive but not necessarily seen as valuable.

Mapping of Assessment Tasks to the NRS

The workplace trainer usually delivers training courses that have tasks that relate to learning outcomes and thus the next step in this project was to use the flow chart sequence (Figure 1), to map TCF Communication I to the NRS using Assessment Tasks. Figure 4 illustrates the results from this exercise:

Fig. 4: Mapping of Assessment Tasks to the NRS

TCF COMMUNICATION I: TEXTILE PRODUCTION CERTIFICATE

Aspects: *Procedural / Technical / Personal / Cooperative / Systems / Public*

Learning Outcome	NRS Indicator	Aspect/s of Communication					
1. Use listening and speaking skills needed to carry out work function		Pr	T	Pe	C	S	Pu
Unable to rate Tasks until they are completed and written activities are assessed. The tasks were located in a self-paced learning package which each trainee worked through. Even though the learning outcome required competence in oral skills the package required the trainee to have competent written skills to demonstrate that they had competent oral skills. An alternative to this method of assessing competency would be to verbally question trainees and then map them on the NRS.							
2. Recognise & interpret a range of simple enterprise information		Pr	T	Pe	C	S	Pu
Unable to rate Tasks until they are completed and written activities are assessed.							
3. Complete simple enterprise forms and records		Pr	T	Pe	C	S	Pu
Unable to rate Tasks until they are completed and written activities are assessed.							

For the purpose of this exercise, tasks located in a self-paced learning package were used. It became apparent that it was a futile exercise to map each trainee's skills because too many assumptions as to how the trainee would approach the tasks were required. The process became very subjective because:

- the literacy skills that a trainee would demonstrate or use when he/she answered each question were unknown
- the level of assistance required by each trainee to complete the tasks is unknown.

Therefore, rating was not possible until a portfolio of the trainee's completed tasks was presented and the trainer had knowledge of the degree of assistance required. This highlighted the fact that tasks should only be mapped when the trainee completes them and produces a variety of evidence in a portfolio. When this occurs there are a number of advantages and disadvantages which become apparent and these are listed in the following figure.

Fig. 5: Mapping Completed Assessment Tasks of an accredited course or module to the NRS

Advantages

- Rates the level of competence achieved by the trainees which may be seen as desirable information for employers.
- Trainees can achieve competency at an AQF level while reaching a higher NRS level than is required, enabling them to determine their future training capabilities.
- Trainees' abilities can be documented reliably and objectively.
- Flexibility and scope of the NRS accommodates the use of familiar tasks (the use of which is common in a workplace training situation).

Disadvantages

- Rates the level of complexity of the language and literacy skills required rather than rating the complexity of the workplace task.
- Higher language and literacy levels do not necessarily determine a trainee's potential to complete workplace tasks within higher AQF levels.
- Use of workplace familiar tasks may lead to an artificially high NRS level.
- The level of assistance required by each trainee is not known if the tasks are completed away from the trainer.
- Incorrect assumptions about a person's ability at unfamiliar tasks may result from assessment occurring using familiar tasks.
- Funding budgets must be reallocated to enable NRS reporting – this reduces training hours.

It can be clearly demonstrated that mapping completed tasks is the only reliable method of determining a trainee's NRS levels. If a training course is of sufficient length and includes a delivery mode which requires language and literacy skills, a portfolio of work that a trainee produces will enable mapping to the NRS.

However, mapping of many trainees' NRS levels introduces a new dimension to competency based training. It is now possible for a group of trainees enrolled in and deemed competent at an AQF Level 1 course to achieve a range of NRS levels. This is effectively rating the level of competence achieved and is against the principles of competency based training. According to ACTRAC (Course Outline and Training

Guides, Workplace Training Category 2, 1995, p. 40), Competency Based Training is defined as:

> *...training concerned with the attainment and demonstration of specified skills, knowledge and their application to meet industry standards rather than with an individual's achievement relative to that of others in a group.*

At this stage it is difficult to determine whether or not the NRS will provide valuable information to DEETYA, trainers, trainees and most importantly the employer.

Conclusion:

This study occurred because of a change to WELL and other funding parameters which now require the mapping of training outcomes to the NRS. The processes involved provided a valuable learning experience for the writers. It became apparent that responsible use of the NRS as a reporting tool requires trainers to be familiar and expert with the NRS document.

The writers' overall conclusion is that responsible and valid reporting to the NRS requires:

- the mapping of completed tasks only because too many assumptions as to the trainee's language and literacy skills in completing each task is required.
- the mapping of each individual's skills – an NRS report generated from mapping the learning outcomes of a course or module prior to delivery does not reliably report an individual's NRS skill level. It is possible for a group of students enrolled in a course and deemed competent at an AQF level to achieve a range of NRS levels.
- using the NRS as an integrated document – that is, Indicators of Competence, Language and Literacy Features, Performance Strategies, Conditions of Performance and Aspects of Communication must be referred to when a rating is determined.
- a portfolio of student work – multiple examples of completed tasks are required to satisfy the guidelines for a thorough assessment process
- the level of support, according to 'Conditions of Performance', that each individual requires to complete a task needs to be taken into account when determining their NRS Indicators of Competence.
- workplace trainers with language and literacy expertise or access to a language and literacy practitioner trained to undertake the NRS mapping process
- allowing a trainee to demonstrate their ability and potential language and literacy skills – workplace tasks may not require the trainee to demonstrate high language and literacy skills and the NRS recorded will not necessarily be a true indicator of a trainee's performance capability.
- the trainee undertaking an accredited course be given the opportunity to project beyond the course's AQF level – otherwise their language and literacy skills may not be measured accurately and may be under-rated.
- the measuring of language and literacy skills whereas workplace training is designed to measure the complexity of workplace tasks – one does not necessarily equate to the other.

Implications

The implications and questions resulting from this examination of how the NRS could be used in the workplace are:

- training using WELL funding now requires trainers to have language and literacy qualifications.
- trainers must have a thorough understanding of the NRS or access to a person who does.
- employers who access WELL funding must be aware that additional hours are required by trainers to responsibly report to the NRS.
- does the NRS provide valuable information to DEETYA, trainers and most importantly, employers?
- what knowledge (if any) do employers who obtain WELL funding need to have about the NRS?

Literacy trainers already using the NRS are coming to terms with the complexity of this reporting tool. However, the application of the NRS in the workplace is still in an experimental stage and as yet it is too early for employers, trainees and trainers to be aware of all of its potential uses.

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Chapter

11

Literacy, numeracy, self-confidence & values: Chickens, eggs and 'access'

Ian Falk & Sue Kilpatrick

Summary

In this chapter we report on some results from a project which sought to uncover the complex relationships between 'integrated' numeracy and literacy skills, self-confidence, and the place of skills, knowledge and values in the learning process. The case of beef producers undertaking training in Quality Assurance (QA) is examined. Like all industry sectors in the western world today, these farmers are faced with dramatic changes in their industry. In the near future, all agricultural products will be required to be quality assured for export markets – responsible for over 50% of purchases in the case of beef; and major retailing supermarket chains – responsible for up to 80% of domestic beef purchases (Ashton et al. 1996) will simply not buy the product unless it is quality assured. Central questions are: How can more farmers become more effective learners? and How can their uptake of training, assumed to be a pathway to QA accreditation, be multiplied?

Through the project's crucial midpoint meeting and subsequent analysis of multiple data sources, evidence is presented which sheds light on the nature and role of 'self-confidence' in the learning process. The chapter further shows how self-confidence relates to the need for suitable numeracy and literacy skills, and comments on the relative importance of self-confidence, numeracy or literacy skills, knowledge and values in the overall learning processes involved in this case of vocational education and training.

Which comes first: self-confidence, numeracy or literacy skills, knowledge or values?

This chapter presents what is really only a by-product of a larger research project which aims at identifying the role of numeracy and literacy skills in the training and education that beef producers undertake in order to become Quality Assurance accredited.

One by-product of the analyses undertaken is, we believe, to help untangle the issues of self-confidence and integrated numeracy and literacy through a re-examination of skills, knowledge and values in learning and education in agriculture (and by implication, other industry sectors). It is hoped that this will help all of us think more clearly about which comes first: self-confidence, numeracy and literacy skills, knowledge or values. All of these are prerequisites to the entire process of learning.

In order for the reader to follow the discussion about self-confidence, the chapter first sets the context of the whole project. Then follows some context on the changing nature of numeracy and literacy requirements in the agricultural sector. The next section discusses the meaning of integrated numeracy and literacy adopted by the project. Explanatory segments on 'access' then lead off the discussion about the true nature of access, skills, knowledge and values. The question of readability of the materials involved follows, and the paper finishes with a discussion of the implications and conclusions for the significance of the learners' values orientation and self-confidence in the early phases of learning.

About the larger project

The project is concerned with the identification of integrated numeracy and literacy skills, and the incorporation of these into a set of recommendations for a learning package for access to more formalised training pathways in the beef industry. Through the use of the beef industry as a case study, it was intended that the project would provide an exemplar for other agricultural (and wider) industry groups nationally. The project research examines the processes, materials and texts used in Quality Assurance and in existing Quality Assurance self-paced training packages. It analyses the numeracy and literacy skills required to use these materials and matches this data with existing data about the target population of farmers obtained from this and existing research. Following the identification of integrated numeracy and literacy skills, the changes required of farmers will be identified, and the various components of the learning process will be integrated into a set of recommendations for training pathways and packages.

Numeracy and literacy in the agricultural sector in Australia

Since most agricultural production is exported, farm businesses are directly exposed to global competitive pressures. The rural sector contributed 29% of Australia's merchandise exports in 1994 – 95 (Martin 1996). Agriculture, like all sectors of industry, is operating in a climate of change. Change is occurring in international markets, in domestic markets, in government protection and in consumer requirements. Change brings with it a need to understand and manipulate new work knowledge and practices, all of which depend on task-oriented up-to-date literacy and numeracy skills. These skills may be unfamiliar to some in the agriculture industry as they increasingly need to engage in formal and nonformal adult learning and training.

Farmers are coming into contact with (a) unfamiliar procedures and practices in their field, and (b) new sources of information and unfamiliar methods of presentation. As well, there are new forms of literacy and numeracy information appearing on a daily basis, including technological changes such as the Internet and electronic mail. Change brings with it the need to adapt to the new forms of numeracy and literacy which are integrated in the work tasks.

The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) (1993) stresses the need for training and flexibility in order for the agricultural sector to remain internationally competitive. The National Farmers Federation states that: '...the skills required of farmers in the past in order to succeed in agriculture will in future need to be supplemented with additional skills in order to cope with the changes that have emerged over recent decades' (National Farmers Federation 1993, p. 75).

Global markets require quality products. Consumers, retailers, wholesalers and food processing companies need assurance that products meet minimum quality standards, for example in terms of chemical residue and disease-free status. The public concern following the recent outbreak of 'mad cow' disease in the United Kingdom emphasises the importance of being able to prove that products meet quality standards.

Quality Assurance procedures and practices, which have evolved at an international level, are essential to Australia's global positioning, yet the present capacity of farmers to understand the entire process and adapt their practices accordingly is not commensurate with the quality implementation scenario. This places even greater strain on individual literacy and numeracy resources to cope with existing and projected change.

The Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation believes that many producers are not able to access Quality Assurance programs because they lack the required numeracy and literacy skills. As well, the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) state that: 'In view of the recognised literacy and numeracy inadequacies of the rural population it is vital that producers have the skills to cope with the requirement that the customer is demanding of them' (Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, personal correspondence, 1996).

It is therefore essential for both the agricultural sector and the Australian economy that Australia's farmers have appropriate kinds of skills, including numeracy and literacy, which will enable them to be confident in dealing with changes such as Quality Assurance and marketing.

Integrated numeracy and literacy

In this project, reference to individuals' numeracy and literacy skills include their capacity to perform with ease the numeracy and literacy components which are a part of and integrated into the existing and expected work tasks with which they are confronted in their daily lives. The numeracy and literacy skills required are both at a basic level and those required for more complex numeracy and literacy tasks. The project also considered the report of the 1993 – 1994 Australian Language and Literacy Policy project, undertaken by the Foundation Studies Training Division of the NSW TAFE Commission, *Integrating English Language, Literacy and Numeracy into Vocational Education and Training: A Framework.*

The following working definition of integrated numeracy and literacy was established. It is consistent with those used by Freebody et al (1993) and Falk (1995 & 1997) and brings together definitions such as those of the Queensland Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (1994) and DEET (1991) in the specific context of vocational purposes:

Numeracy, literacy and language are used for different purposes within a wide variety of differing situations. Vocational settings, or workplaces, form one such group of settings, but each setting contains different, context dependent numeracy, literacy and language competences. The vocational and workplace settings provide the social activities in which language, literacy and numeracy competences are embedded.

The implication of this point for the project is that the term 'integrated' numeracy, literacy and language processes and practices refers to the 'embeddedness' of the numeracy, literacy and language competence. The nature of the embeddedness determines the nature of the 'integration' of numeracy, literacy and language competences in that site, in that context, at that time, with those varying activities which are displayed or required there. Moreover, embedded numeracy and literacy practices are always about something (Gee 1990), and always incorporate values or sets of values (Falk 1995; Gee 1990).

Literacy and numeracy in Quality Assurance in agriculture

A number of Quality Assurance programs have been established in agriculture, for example Cattlecare in the beef industry and Flockcare in the sheep industry. These programs are based on the ISO 9000 series of quality standards (International Organisation for Standardisation). Producers who participate in the Quality Assurance programs must be able to understand market requirements and be able to produce to those requirements. As well, meticulous and often complex record keeping is required of primary producers. Self-paced training programs are available for those seeking Quality Assurance accreditation. The processes on which Quality Assurance procedures are based include a wide range of numeracy and literacy skills. These skills are essential for active participation in Quality Assurance in agriculture, but they have not been made explicit.

Quality Assurance involves procedures and record keeping practices relating to chemical handling, staff training, stock records, stock transaction records, livestock handling and transport, livestock chemical treatment and stock feed. These procedures require literacy and numeracy skills which will be unfamiliar to many producers.

Quality Assurance, literacy, numeracy and effective training

The effectiveness of a training program depends on matching the characteristics of the learners and the material to be learnt. The program must be delivered in a manner which suits the participants' learning styles. The program must also be matched with the purpose and expected outcomes. There is some existing research on the characteristics of farmers and their preferred delivery methods from previous Australian national Training Authority (ANTA) – funded projects (Kilpatrick 1996, 1997), so the outcomes of this project will also develop and add to the body of knowledge about learning styles of the rural workforce.

Project methodology

To test the definition of integrated numeracy and literacy put forward earlier in this chapter the project employed a multi-site, multi-method approach. Data from four sources were collected and analysed:

- documents and training days which form part of the Quality Assurance training process;
- three case studies of farms which have Cattlecare Quality Assurance Accreditation. These properties were visited, and the processes, documents and equipment (such as cattle yards and chemical storage facilities) which they used for Quality Assurance were observed;

- semi-structured telephone interviews with four farmers in each of four states who have attended Cattlecare training days between one and twelve months prior to the interview (sixteen interviews);
- semi-structured telephone interviews with Cattlecare trainers and a Cattlecare auditor.

The qualitative data was analysed using the NUD*IST data analysis software package (see Graham & Hannibal 1998). The documents were analysed according to FOG and Fleisch readability indices and a classification of lists, tables and forms by Kirsch and Mosenthal (Mosenthal & Kirsch 1989a, 1989b, 1990a, 1990b, Kirsch & Mosenthal 1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1990c).

The discussion about the larger project

About halfway through the research project, the two researchers and two research assistants (both of the latter are also beef producers) had a landmark meeting. The discussion included listing the documents and texts associated with QA in the beef industry which had to be analysed in order to ascertain what skills, knowledge and values were required to access them; and determining how to analyse the documents and texts associated with QA in the beef industry.

What is access? Question one)

We found we had to pose the question, 'What is meant by "access"?'. We referred to the existing research, as well as imagining what farmers would have to do (skills), know (knowledge) and value (values, attitudes, feelings) in order to access Quality Assurance in general terms. Then we could consider what specific barriers to access lay in the printed materials associated with QA in the beef industry – in self-paced learning materials, training program, awareness days (orientation programmes) and the like.

So the question, 'What is meant by "access"?' became the first of the two crucial questions in this discussion. After a fulsome debate, we decided that the answer to that question was 'Access has been achieved once the first [QA] audit has been completed successfully'. An interesting point for further consideration is to test how this definition might be generaliseable to other areas of adult and vocational education where a more traditional view of access prevails.

Then we organised a brainstorming session around the question, 'What do farmers have to be able to know (knowledge), do (skills) and value in order to access quality assurance?', and the result looked like this:

Knowledge	Skills (Global Areas)	Values
• Know that QA exists	• Literacy & numeracy	• Value QA as important (only as a result of concern for $$$?)
• Know about QA	• Numeracy	• Value top quality produce
• Know about market forces, globalisation and change	• Educational	• Value change as the way to achieve goals
• Know about agriculture/ farming (how to farm)	• Agricultural/farming	• Recognise their own self-confidence to proceed
• Know enough about QA to know they can do it	• Book- and record keeping	• Value learning (skills, knowledge) as important
• Know that risks exist	• Farm mapping	
• Know how to identify risks	• Risk identification	
	• Self-direction and management skills	

The result on the whiteboard seems unremarkable at first. We listed the columns in the sequence shown (knowledge first, skills, then values) because that is the sequence we commonly used in our discussions and found in the literature (e.g., Donaldson & Scannell 1986). That there should be significance in the actual *sequence* in which people really engage in each of these categories of activities had not occurred to us. But it would come next, when we related this knowledge and these skills and values to a discussion about priorities or stages of access to the skills, knowledge and values embodied in 'quality assurance'.

Chicken and egg (Question two)

The second crucial question was asked when we wondered, 'But what do farmers have to do/know/value *first*'? What sequence do these groups or items form when we attempt to discover what comes first? *Knowing* the importance of QA is not a sufficient condition for an engagement with further learning. Neither is being able *to do* any or all the skills listed any guarantee that learning will be engaged in. It seemed to us that it is the very last item in the last column which underpins the whole question of access, namely, that farmers have to first of all *value* learning (knowledge, skills) as important.

The more time we spent reflecting on this question, the more clearly we realised that no engagement with formal learning (going to information sessions, doing a learning package) would occur unless farmers first valued the knowledge and skills associated with QA sufficiently to be prepared to engage in the next step – which is to find out more about QA and what is means for them.

What does 'access' really involve?

We re-sequenced the items in the chart above, and in consultation with one farmer, deleted heavily context-dependent items, and ordered the remainder of the items to reflect factors of crucial importance in accessing QA *before* entering even information days or other more formal awareness procedures. When the chart above is re-configured to reflect the sequence of values, knowledge and skills which form an 'access pathway', the significance of the discussion can be seen:

Values	Knowledge	Skills (Global Areas)
1 Value learning (skills,	1 Know that QA exists	1 Skills of keeping in touch with knowledge) as important matters beyond the farm
gate		
2 Value change as the way to achieve goals: being prepared to accept direction from others	2 Know about state, national and international issues, market forces, globalisation & change	2 Communication / literacy skills, especially talking, listening, observing and critically evaluating information
3 Recognise their own self-confidence to proceed	3 Know about farming and of own enterprise	3 Technical farming skills, numeracy and literacy skills

So it was posed at this middle stage of the project as a hypothetical statement that the values, knowledge and skills which are crucial for people (farmers) to access further education (about QA) are reflected in both the sequence of the columns in the table above, as well as in the sequence of items within these columns. It became the task of the balance of the project to test this statement, refine and develop it, then ensure that any recommended awareness and learning program takes account of these factors, both in its content and its mode of delivery.

The discussion compared with the results: A picture of the overall results in respect to numeracy and literacy

Analysis of observations of Quality Assurance process on the three case study farms, and examination of the Cattlecare manuals, suggests that the following skills are required to access Quality Assurance:

- appropriate level of numeracy
- appropriate level of literacy
- book- and record keeping
- agricultural/farming
- farm mapping
- risk identification
- self-direction and management skills
- skills of keeping in touch with matters beyond the farm gate.

The results which follow refer to literacy, numeracy and record keeping.

Numeracy skills

The three case studies showed that the numeracy skills required for the non-chemical handling parts of Cattlecare are mostly counting, recording, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Producers need to count cattle, record stock movements on and off the farm and between paddocks, record chemical usage and add and subtract quantities of chemicals held as they are purchased and used. Chemical mixing and administration involve the more complex tasks of measuring, and interpreting and calculating mathematical ratios. The skills required roughly equate to the top level of a Year 10 mathematics course (see, for example, Strasser, Phillips, & Nolan 1995).

Readability of printed materials

In order to access Cattlecare, farmers must be able to read, understand and apply the material presented in two manuals: *Cattlecare Code of Practice* and *Cattlecare Training Manual* (Cattle Council of Australia 1995a, 1995b). They must also have someone on the farm who has passed the Farm Chemical Accreditation Certificate, which is a national vocational educational and training certificate.

The project team thought it important to have some relatively objective measure of readability, but were aware of the considerable debate, historical and ongoing, about the merits of readability formulae. Instead, then, of using readability formulae categorically, it was decided to use them (a) in tandem – that is, to use more than one – and (b) to use them comparatively – that is, to measure the readability of several different texts such as newspapers and then compare the Cattlecare manuals with those texts. In this way, those unfamiliar with readability test outcomes could make a judgment about the difficulty of the texts by comparing them with each other. As is always recommended in the use of readability formulae, their use should be tempered by reference to other criteria such as use of white space, layout and design and the target audience and purpose. These factors were drawn on in the larger project, but only the readability formulae results are presented here.

The results of our document analysis suggest that the Cattlecare manuals are relatively complex. The average of FOG and Fleisch readability indices for the manuals and a range of other agricultural and popular literature is shown in figure 1. The Cattlecare manuals have a higher readability index than farming and popular newspapers and magazines. As well, the *Farm Chemical Accreditation Handbook* (required reading for the prerequisite Farm Chemical Accreditation Certificate) is more difficult to read than all the material in the chart except the *Weekend Australian* newspaper.

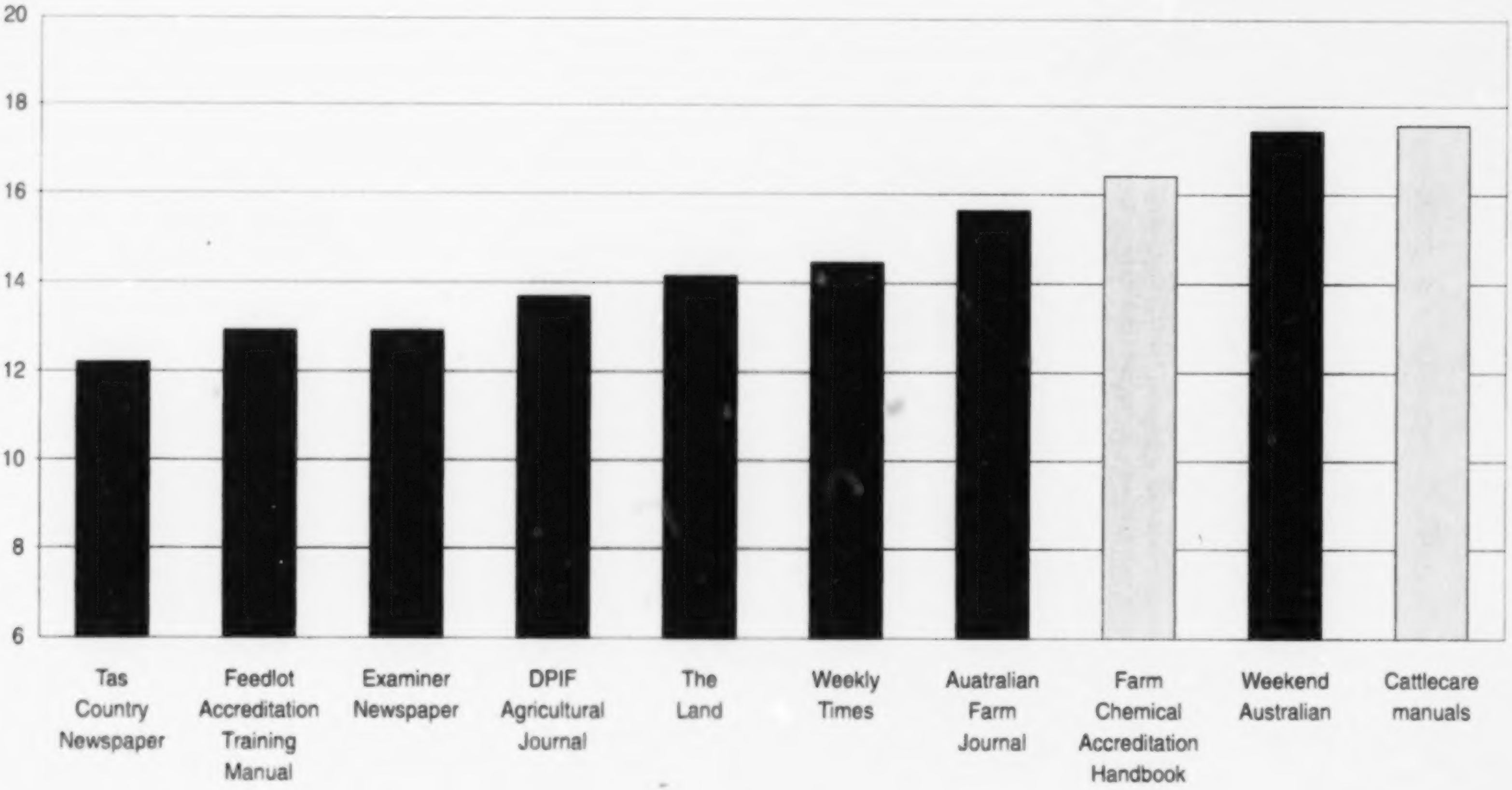

Figure 1 Comparative readability of Quality Assurance material, farming and general

Lists and tables

Another way of looking at the complexity of documents is to consider the form and complexity of the lists, tables and graphs which they contain. Mosenthal and Kirsch (1989a, 1989b, 1990a, 1990b; Kirsch & Mosenthal 1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1990c) classify lists, tables and forms in order of increasing complexity. Their work on this topic is based on research, and was evaluated by the project team as being highly suitable for adapting for the purpose used in this project. For lists and tables, their classifications are:

- simple lists, such as a chemical shed inventory;
- combined lists, which consist of two simple lists, for example, a list of weight of beast and the corresponding amount of chemical to apply;
- intersecting lists, which contain three simple lists. Most have column and row headings plus other features in the table such as sub-labels, or shading, for example figure 2 below; and
- nested lists, which contain four or more simple lists, for example the sample Cattlecare form in figure 3 below.

Figure 2 Example of intersected list from Cattlecare training manual

ON FARM QUALITY PROBLEMS

MRL – INFRINGEMENTS – (ACTUAL EXAMPLES)

Producer	Residual detected	Key findings of traceback	Proposed actio
A	S'dimidine 0.1ppm in muscle	Farmer admitted failing to observe the WHP.	Probable infringement notice.
B	S'dimidine, S'diazine and metabolites in urine.	Sulfa product in use. No admission. Calves condemned previously.	Case under review. Will be prosecuted if possible.
C	Penicillin 0.04ppm in muscle.	Calf received 3 to 5 times correct dose. WHP observed.	Prosecution is unlikely as level detected was just below MRL. Warning letter.
D	S'diazine 3.313ppm & S'dimidine 2.61ppm in kidney.	Farmer claims that residue was due to the use of a contaminated bottle.	Levels detected very high and not consistent with trace contamination. Case under review.
E	Oxytetracycline in 2 calves at 0.2 & 0.37ppm in kidney.	Inexperienced children used product due to family illness.	Warning letter.
F	S'dimidine, S'diazine and metabolites in urine.	Children feed calves and used contaminated bucket.	Possible prosecution if residue in kidneys is >MRL
G	S'dimidine in urine.	No admission of sulfa use. Farmer's vet contacted and confirmed that farmer purchased S'dimidine containing product few days before detection.	Further interview planned. Probable prosecution.

Figure 3 Nested list from Cattlecare Code of Practice manual

PADDOCK TREATMENT RECORDS

PADDOCK USEAGE					STOCK MOVEMENT	
Date	Paddock Name/Treatment	Name/Signed	Quarantine Period	Herd No	Date in	Date out

Figure 4 shows that the Cattlecare manuals contain a large number of more complex lists and tables. The Cattlecare Code, which serves as a template for the documentation required for Quality Assurance accreditation, has lists and tables in a form which are particularly difficult to understand.

Figure 4 Lists and tables in Cattlecare documents

Document	Simple lists	Combined lists	Intersected lists	Nested lists
Cattlecare Code of Practice Manual	17	35	–	28
Cattlecare Training Manual	32	15	6	2

Forms and record keeping

The record keeping required for Quality Assurance is another skill. Farmers can use any record keeping system which meets Cattlecare requirements, and the manuals give examples of forms which satisfy these requirements. Kirsch and Mosenthal (1990b, 1990c) classify the complexity of forms according to the form structure (a similar classification to that for lists above), source of the information to be filled in, and the response mode.

In order of increasing complexity, sources of the information to place on the form are:

- prior knowledge, usually from memory, for example the paddocks which stock were moved from and to;
- information found on the form itself, such as whether or not withholding periods have been observed on a Vendor Declaration Form;
- user needs to refer to other sources, for example a farmer checking a notebook for identification numbers of cattle treated with a drug.

Response modes, again in order of increasing complexity, are:

- identifying a single element from a list with a check mark, for example, ticking a box on a Vendor Declaration Form;
- entering elements, such as number of cattle sold or name of chemical used;

- generating an open – ended response, such as recording types and locations of risks on the property, like old dip sites.

Many of the Cattlecare template forms are at the more complex end of the structure spectrum, that is, integrated or nested lists. Many require information to be noted in the paddock or stockyard, then transferred later to the Cattlecare form (by hand or on computer) in the farm office. Thus, sources of information tend to also be at the more complex end of the spectrum. Most response modes are in the middle of the complexity spectrum, as they require entering elements. The form in figure 3 is an example, where the elements to be entered are paddock name, treatment, quarantine period, herd number, etc.

Cattlecare and farmers' skills

From the readability indices and the classification of the lists and forms according to Kirsch and Mosenthal's framework for understanding documents, it appears that the Cattlecare manuals are at the more complex end of the spectrum of documents. A small number of the farmers interviewed had no problems with the training days and manuals, such as this farmer:

Q Did you find the manual okay to use?

A Yes that was fine ... I read it when I came home, ... not all of it, the things that were relevant to us, the few bits that were relevant because most of it we already do you know, we run our herd on stud lines, all our animals are numbered, they are tattooed, ...we record where they are moved... (NSW farmer 1)

However, like NSW farmer 1, most had not read all, or in most cases, any, of the manuals after the training day:

A They took us through it [the manual] step by step...

Q And have you used it since then?

A No, I haven't ... (NSW farmer 2)

A I probably got it [the manual] 9 months ago, but I've been fairly busy since then so I haven't done much about it... I've had a glance through it but I haven't read it properly. (Victorian farmer 1)

The farmers who had used the manual since their training day generally said that their practices already matched the Cattlecare process to a large extent, as did NSW farmer 1 above. Most of those who had not used the manual, in contrast, gave examples of how adopting Cattlecare would be expensive, as did NSW farmer 2 above, or change long established practices which they believed were quite satisfactory:

> *Because of necessity we will have to keep records somewhere, we probably haven't got to prove anything. But if you don't keep records of everything that you've done ... there could be a problem.* (Queensland farmer 1)
>
> *When I spray ... [contractors from a distant town] spray the whole place with the most minimal amount of MCPA and then they go, and Cattlecare say you've got to destock every paddock when you spray for 7 days. Where do you put them [the cattle]?* (South Australian farmer 1)

Fenwick and Weatherhead (1994) found that 66% of farmers surveyed could interpret a 'Round Up' chemical spray label and calculate the correct amount needed for a 400 litre handgun, but only 10% could work out how much drench to buy for their herd from the information on the drench label.

Few of the farmers interviewed had Farm Chemical Accreditation Certificates, or had definite plans to attend a Farm Chemical Accreditation course:

> *Two of us have got to go off and do a chemical course. ... it's going to cost me and it's*

> *pushing me so far up against the wall when I've got my back to the wall anyway, and I'm one of the top people'.* (NSW farmer 3)

When the numeracy skills needed for correct use of chemicals are also considered, alongside the information which we have about the range of farmers' literacy and numeracy skills, it is clear that for some farmers, like the one quoted below, access to Cattlecare depends on some upskilling.

> *The way the chaps spoke that day [awareness day] ... it just seemed too complicated really for the average person to take on.* (Queensland farmer 1)

Knowledge

The case studies and interviews with trainers and the auditor gave us the following list of knowledge required to access Quality Assurance:

- know that QA exists and how to find out more about it
- know about market forces, globalisation and change
- know about farming and of own enterprise
- know how to identify risks.

All those interviewed had attended a Quality Assurance awareness or training day, so all were aware of Quality Assurance, and had found out more about it through the awareness or training day.

Most made some statements that suggested they were aware of the forces behind Quality Assurance. There was a general consensus that Quality Assurance was inevitable, and that they would eventually have to be audited. Most explained with reasons that related directly to their own farm business:

> *I've got no choice because the people I'm buying my bulls for are insisting on it.* (Queensland farmer 1

Only a few farmers gave 'global', or 'big picture' reasons to explain why they would have to become Quality Assurance accredited:

> *We felt there was a need for something like this to keep a check on it because the industry is just in turmoil really, so if enough people get involved in this it will straighten a lot of that ... it will help us with the marketing of our product.* (Victorian farmer 3)

Most farmers could identify some changes which they would have to make to their practice or their farm, for example changes to yards or isolating dip sites:

> *I've done a few of the lead up things such as the identifying all my cattle... probably 3/4 of those that have come through the yards I've tagged them with an identification number.* (NSW farmer 4)

> *People went home and looked at their yards or looked at their chemical storage or looked at the facilities they had and started adding up the pennies...* (South Australian farmer 4)

The vast majority of the farmers interviewed could estimate the cost of the changes they would have to make to become Cattlecare accredited, and the cost of the auditor's time and travel to their property. These farmers identified the cost of Cattlecare and the low prices they are receiving as the reason they had not taken any further steps toward Cattlecare accreditation after their training or awareness day:

> *... having this place audited, that's going to be a large expense for me and at this stage it's a game, because cattle prices are at an all – time low. We would have to put a new bale in for containing the bull's head and that's $900, we've got to do a bit of fencing around old areas that have been used as sheep yards...* (NSW farmer 2)

Skills, knowledge and values

The discussion of skills and knowledge above suggests two possible reasons for failure to proceed with Quality Assurance: (i) the relatively high level of literacy and numeracy skills required, and (ii) the high cost of necessary changes and accreditation, particularly in a time of depressed prices. At first glance, it may seem that the farmers interviewed who attended the Quality Assurance days and have their Cattlecare manuals haven't gone any further for one or both of these reasons. However, to do so would ignore the issue of values.

Strong Cattlecare-fostering and Cattlecare-inhibiting values emerged from the data analysis. Many of the inhibiting values related to attitudes to industry directions. Roughly three – quarters of those interviewed expressed Cattlecare-inhibiting values, such as this:

> *It's hitting us at the far end rather than at the end product. Once it goes through the abattoirs we lose absolute control of it. My cattle ... would probably be top grade, but you get bugger – all recognition for anything like that. Once it goes through the abattoirs it's just one piece of meat.* (Queensland farmer 2)
>
> *We are going so wrong in the beef industry. We have got these stupid advertisements on the television saying eat lean beef and anyone would know that lean beef was so tough.* (Queensland farmer 4)

These values contrast with those of a small number of farmers who expressed Cattlecare-fostering values. Most fostering values related to the 'bigger picture' and changing practices so as to market to consumer requirements, like those voiced by these farmers:

> *...they've [farmers with negative attitudes to Cattlecare] got to think a bit wider because it's going to come... you're accessing your own markets more or less now.* (Victorian farmer 2)
>
> *It's something that's been lacking for a long long time...we're hopelessly behind; it's absolutely disgusting what passes for quality beef to the retail outlets.* (South Australian farmer 4)

By bringing together data from the case studies and farmer interviews, we identified the following values as required for accessing Quality Assurance:

- value learning (skills, knowledge) as important
- value change as the way to achieve goals: being prepared to accept direction from others, such as industry leaders
- recognise their own self-confidence to proceed.

Which comes first, skills knowledge or values?

What do farmers have to do (skills)/know (knowledge)/value first in the access process? Being able *to do* any or all of the required skills, such as reading and understanding manuals, and mixing chemicals correctly, is no guarantee that the learning necessary to proceed with quality assurance will occur. Neither is knowing the importance of QA a sufficient condition for an engagement with further learning for QA.

Analysis of the data shows that most of those who expressed Cattlecare – fostering values had taken some steps toward Quality Assurance, while those who expressed inhibiting values had not. For example, NSW farmer 4, quoted above, who had started to tag cattle, expressed Cattlecare – fostering values. Queensland farmers 2 and 4, also quoted above, have made no plans to take any of the steps necessary to proceed with Cattlecare.

It seems that the thing which underpins the whole question of access is that farmers have to first of all *value* learning (skills, knowledge) as important. Only then will they move on to learning and so to acquiring the skills and knowledge which they need.

Some implications: What is 'learning'

As the study established, our traditional notions of learning need to be revisited. The prerequisite to any kind of formal learning was confirmed to be an orientation stage, when the farmers need to first of all accept that change was a process they needed to engage with, and then that Quality Assurance had something that they wanted and needed. The first step in 'the learning process' was therefore *to accept the need to learn.*

Now this seems quite unextraordinary to the more traditional literacy and numeracy educators – those who have for many years argued for the central role of self-confidence in the learning process; without this self-confidence, it is argued, the learners will not progress. The problem with the term 'self-confidence' is that it is so hard to get hold of, to define and then to quantify for accountability and reporting purposes. The last few decades of increased funding to adult literacy and numeracy programs have shown the importance of being able to clearly and precisely say what it is that adult literacy and numeracy educators have achieved.

We believe that, in this project, we can show that the development of self-confidence is demonstrable as the 'orientation' phase of learning, where learners are led to accept the need to go on with their learning. In other words, the values that this research shows as necessarily preceding any other aspect of the learning process equate with the development of self-confidence.

The chief task now is to tackle the thorny problem of 'teaching values'. What is also clear from the project is that learning new values is the same process as becoming encultured into a new set of values, and there is an established body of research literature on the nature of learning as acquiring the values of a new 'culture'. In the most significant ways possible, learning is the process of gaining self-confidence in oneself as a learner through recognising that new values are valuable for oneself, of recognising the value of assuming those values for one's own benefit, and then, and only then, being able to master the linguistic and numeric features of those new value-systems in order to function within them.

QA for beef farmers presents a range of elements which are different forms of valuing, knowing and doing. In this sense, the nonformal learning process identified in this project is very much a process of moving from one set of cultural values to another.

Summary and conclusion

What is significant is that the term 'access' (and its presently favoured vocational education and training cousin, 'participation') is often used glibly, and as if all we need to do is provide formal and nonformal exposure to skills, knowledge and values acquisition. It is clear that 'nonformal learning' in value-formation before any 'formal learning' occurs is crucial to ensure later access to more formal kinds of education and training. It is also apparent that certain knowledges – 'knowledge that' and 'knowledge how' – form a group of necessary prerequisites for further learning opportunities to be accessed.

Another finding is that numeracy and literacy practices could not be disembedded from each other, nor from the task of which they are a part. That is, it is not possible to say 'This is a numeracy task', or 'This is a literacy task', or that one or the other should be learned first or not at all. When the complex nature of the various documents required for understanding and monitoring QA are analysed, it is not possible to indicate one aspect in this process whose importance seems greater than another. Understanding the way the forms were set out, the reading of words and numbers within the forms, the tasks of writing words and numbers in various parts of the forms – all these are required to be executed in particular real-life contexts (cattle yards; farm kitchens; in tractors; with colleagues, business partners, employees) and not in formal training rooms or from training packages. The task-embeddedness of the contributing skills is fully evident in the analyses reported here.

Neither were numerical and literacy activities prerequisites for learning about QA. Prerequisite for moving further on into the learning process was the farmers' willingness to accept that change was necessary to them in their personal circumstances at that particular time. Another prerequisite for learning is the farmers' need to orient themselves to Quality Assurance, and it is at this point that numerical and literacy skills are shown to be crucial in facilitating the more formal acquisition of the knowledge and skills which lead to accreditation in QA.

Perhaps most importantly of all, the reflections demonstrate the gross assumptions many of us have tended to make about the importance of 'formal learning', since it is suggested here that the most important part of learning occurs before the 'formal' stage in nonformal yet identifiable and categorical ways. Of the three traditional features of learning – skills, knowledge and values – it has been shown that values come first, an orientation of learners to the need for change; then comes the subject of the learning (in this case QA). Values are an absolute prerequisite to access and participation in further learning processes.

The development of self-confidence is shown in the 'values' stage of learning, where 'orientation' to the task is required. Learners at these early stages are led to accept the need to go on with their learning. In other words, the values that this research shows as necessarily preceding any other aspect of the learning process equate with the development of what adult literacy and numeracy teachers have termed 'self-confidence'. The accountability required in the adult literacy and numeracy teaching profession these days is such that the results of this project may assist in framing real (not 'warm and fuzzy') outcomes for the orientation phase of learning. These are outcomes that the field of literacy and numeracy has been attempting to formalise for many years, yet about which they keep being told, 'But that's not about learning literacy and numeracy; that's a retention problem'. So accountability is relegated to being an administrative rather than educational function – or is simply ignored.

In the case of this project, the researchers found that some 75% of beef producers were avoiding 'coming to grips' with change and further education about QA. Initial orientation to learning, accepting the need for personal and family change, being prepared to 'give learning a go' as a solution to a problem rather than as creating a new one – these are the 'content areas' of the early stages of a rethought learning process. Unless this point is enshrined in policy and funding applications, we will continue to automatically 'block out' – prohibit from access and participation – a huge proportion of the training market in any single industry.

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Chapter

12

Performance assessment in second language learning:

Some problems and issues in the adult sector

Fiona Cotton

Abstract

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is a test used by tertiary level institutions in Australia and overseas to assess the English language proficiency of international students whose native language is not English and who wish to study at tertiary level in English – medium countries. As such, IELTS is an influential test in that the careers and tertiary level studies of many depend on their ability to pass IELTS. The first part of this chapter outlines the theoretical background to second language assessment before discussing the use of IELTS at one regional university in Australia. It goes on to discuss problems sometimes encountered, together with ways in which these difficulties can be overcome.

Performance based assessment in the adult migrant sector has a different emphasis. It focuses on achievement testing, and the completion of a whole range of tasks to demonstrate second language competence. The tasks and guidelines for their use are outlined in the Certificate of Spoken and Written English (CSWE), and are used at the Adult Migrant English Service (AMES) throughout Australia. Although admirable in that the tasks reflect authentic language use and may have an advantageous backwash effect, the use of CSWE as an assessment tool is fraught with difficulties. Discussion focuses on problems associated with the use of CSWE in a regional centre, and in particular, how this affects rater reliability and external validity. Some recommendations are made as to how such difficulties might be overcome.

Introduction

While both the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Certificate of Spoken and Written English (CSWE) (Hagan et al. 1993) could be considered as tests of communicative language performance, the purpose of each is different. IELTS is a general test of English language proficiency for students who wish to undertake tertiary level study in Britain or Australia. IELTS aims to assess performance in all four macroskills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and acts as a screen to determine those students whose English language proficiency falls to the level at which it will impede their ability to succeed academically. CSWE, on the other hand, attempts to provide a profile of student competencies in a wide range of communicative tasks, at four levels of difficulty. Before discussing the use of these two forms of performance assessment in a regional context, I shall review various theoretical aspects of testing and of second language performance assessment. I shall outline some of the difficulties encountered with the use of IELTS and CSWE in relation to these theoretical issues as well as the ways in which these difficulties have been or might be overcome. The discussion draws on a study of the predictive validity of IELTS (Cotton & Conrow 1998), as well as personal experience as an IELTS examiner in a range of institutional contexts. It is also informed by the comparative experience of using CSWE while teaching in the Adult Migrant English Program.

Theoretical background

When designing and implementing tests, attention needs to be paid to two important issues; test validity and test reliability. In general terms, the central question to be asked in relation to validity is, does the test assess that which it aims to assess? If the intention of a test is to measure or assess second language performance or language in use, the question needs to be asked, what does it mean to know how to use a language? What is it that is being measured? Only then can we tell if the test being used is really valid.

Communicative competence

Reading of the literature indicates that there is disagreement about what it means to know how to use a language. Different terms are used in different and confusing ways. What is meant by communicative language ability? How does this relate to communicative competence? What is the relationship between knowledge of a language and performance? What does it mean to know how to use a language? The difficulties of providing a comprehensive theoretical model of language learning and acquisition is mentioned by Davies (1989, p. 162), who, when discussing communicative competence, states that it:

> *...suffers from two kinds of problem; it is shapeless and therefore difficult – even impossible – to define or limit for research, and especially for teaching. It is also ambiguous in that it slides backwards and forwards ... between knowledge and control (or proficiency).*

A summary of the perceptions of some of the major contributors to this field, which will of necessity be brief, may provide a better theoretical understanding of what it is that language testers are attempting to measure.

Traditionally, models of language learning and acquisition were based on the underlying assumptions that knowledge of the rules of language use were fundamental to what was known as 'linguistic competence' in a language. However, Hymes (1972) points out that competence includes not only the user's knowledge of rules of language use in context but also what he terms, 'ability for use' or the ability to use the language appropriately.

Canale and Swain (1980) see a distinction between communicative competence and communicative performance, the former embodying a knowledge of the rules of use the latter, the ability to use them appropriately. Thus 'linguistic competence' is seen to be part of communicative competence. Canale and Swain's model of language ability goes further and includes four main components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. However, the model does not show how these different components interrelate with each other.

The Bachman/Palmer (1990) model of communicative language ability, on the other hand, attempts to show the relationships between the different components. Thus the three major components of language ability are seen by Bachman and Palmer to be language competence, strategic competence or what they later term metacognitive strategies, and psychophysiological mechanisms. The first of these can be further subdivided: the two components of organisational competence are grammatical competence and textual competence; pragmatic competence is subdivided into illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. Spolsky (1989) asserts however that both the Canale and Swain model and the Bachman/Palmer model are oversimplifications and that the complexity of the relationships and the overlap between the different components of communicative competence are not fully illustrated by the models proposed.

In 'What does it mean to know how to use a language?' (1985) Spolsky hypothesises that there are three kinds of answer to the question he poses in the article title. The first asserts knowledge of discrete parts of a language, underlying such statements as, 'I know a few words'. Spolsky refers to this as the *Structural Claim*, and suggests it underlies the competence model dealing with underlying knowledge. The second asserts an ability to use language for particular purposes which underlies statements like, 'I know how to read professional books in that language'. Spolsky refers to this assertion as the *Functional Claim*. The idea of performance is central to this claim and is usually aligned with the communicative language learning and testing approach. The final answer asserts knowledge of a certain amount of the target language found in such statements as. 'I know only a little'. And it is this which Spolsky refers to as the *General Proficiency Claim*.

It has been suggested that these three claims can loosely be linked to the three main purposes to which tests can be put and also to the type of information which is required; for example, an overall number versus a profile of competencies and so on. Thus the structural claim forms the theoretical basis for diagnostic tests which attempt to determine which particular linguistic items are causing problems for the testee. It can be argued that the functional claim most closely associated with communicative language testing underlies achievement tests which purport to find out what the testee can do. Thus the performance of particular functions is central to this kind of test. The testee's performance is then compared with some kind of performance criteria. The CSWE is an example of this kind of test. Finally, the General Proficiency Claim seems central to placements tests, where one is attempting to place students according to their overall level of proficiency, or in the case of IELTS, attempting to determine the cut-off point below which students are more like to fail academically.

However, the extent to which these claims overlap and interrelate is as yet incompletely understood. For example, Brindley (1989) points out that both achievement tests and proficiency tests are not as distinct as one might suppose since they both derive from a similar model or concept (albeit implicit) of language ability. It seems therefore that definitive theories of communicative competence do not exist. As Weir (1990, p. 7) states:

> *What we need is a theory which guides and predicts how an underlying communicative competence is manifested in actual performance... Since such definitive theories do not exist, testers have to do the best they can with such theories as are available.*

Test validity

It is against this background that the development of IELTS and CSWE has to be understood. In particular, the performance criteria used in both forms of assessment are based on an incomplete model of communicative competence and must of necessity reflect any shortcomings of the existing models. This therefore, has consequences as regards test validity.

For those teachers and testers who work with assessment procedures which are already in operation, there seems little that they can do about such shortcomings. There is anecdotal evidence that many practising teachers involved in testing are unhappy with some of the band – scale descriptors of the IELTS and with the precise meaning of the performance criteria used in CSWE. They can only hope that linguistic experts will develop more comprehensive models of communicative competence which will result in more precise definitions of existing performance criteria and result in increased test validity.

Before discussing the validity and reliability of IELTS and CSWE further, it may be useful to review some other aspects of communicative language tests which are important for both test validation and test reliability. What is known as 'domain specification' is essential where clear specifications are drawn up of which area of language is to be tested. It is also important that a representative sample of communicative language ability be reflected in the tasks included in communicative language tests.

Authenticity is a central feature of communicative language tests which attempt to measure 'real – life' communication. For example, texts taken from real sources are used as input and as far as possible are not simplified or altered in any way. It is also thought that communicative language tests should be as direct as possible in order to increase content validity. Weir (1990, p. 5) writes that 'only direct tests which simulate relevant authentic communication tasks can claim to mirror actual communicative interaction'.

There are a number of other ways to increase a test's validity. One of these is to compare the testee's performance in the test under investigation and some other form of assessment (concurrent validity). Another way is to ascertain how well performance in the test predicts the ability of the testee to perform at some future date in some other context. This is generally referred to as external or predictive validity.

Test reliability

Not only should a test have validity, but it should also be reliable. This has to do with consistency of test results. Would a student's communicative performance consistently gain the same result on repeated occasions? Would an assessor make the same assessment of a student's communicative performance on different occasions? Would another assessor come to the same conclusions? Would their results be consistent with each other?

Hughes (1989) lists a number of ways to increase the reliability of a test. First, enough samples need to be taken of the performance being assessed; the student should not be allowed too much freedom of choice in performance task; testing conditions, including the timing of the test, the acoustic conditions and so on, should be standardised. If this is not done, then performances can vary considerably from occasion to occasion and measures of such performances can no longer be thought of as reliable. Most importantly, assessors or testers should be trained. This is especially pertinent where the assessment is subjective as in the marking of a piece of writing or an oral assessment. Where ever possible in subjective testing, there should be two or more independent assessors in order to increase test reliability. Moderation of assessment tasks and performances on a regular basis are also essential to increase what is often referred to as inter – and intra-rater reliability.

IELTS and its use in a regional context

Although the IELTS test has been used at the University of Tasmania since its introduction in 1990, there are indications that little is known about its design or use by the academic staff of the institution (Cotton & Conrow 1998). IELTS is a proficiency test which includes a reading and a writing test, each of which is one hour in length, a forty minute listening test and a 15 minute interview. It was designed and trialled by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) and the Australian government's International Development Program (IDP), and involved a team of expert language testers. While the reading and listening tests are marked clerically, the interview and writing papers are more subjective. Each student's performance is measured against a nine band scale of performance descriptors.

To determine the validity of IELTS we need establish whether it measures what it intends to measure. While the general domain is that of academic English it could be said that IELTS has content validity. However, some may consider IELTS too general a test to be an accurate measure of a student's ability to cope with the academic English demands of his or her particular course. Further research is needed to clarify this perception. Originally there were a number of different papers to be taken by students studying different subjects, but in 1995, these were abandoned in favour of a more general paper of academic English.

To the best of my knowledge there is no empirical evidence to date to suggest that students have been disadvantaged by this change. Research funds have been specifically allocated to various projects over a number of years in order to increase the test's validity and reliability. In general, the findings of these research projects (see *IELTS Research Reports* 1998) suggest that IELTS, despite its shortcomings, is a reasonably valid tool in relation to other similar assessment instruments. For example, a review of the literature on predictive validity studies which have examined the relationship between scores in IELTS and academic achievement seems to indicate that although a strong correlation between IELTS and academic outcomes is very difficult to establish, the correlation becomes stronger the lower the scores achieved. This seems to indicate that the IELTS cut-off score of 6+ serves is a reasonable gatekeeper in sorting out those who will fail on the basis of their English language proficiency (Cotton & Conrow, 1998).

In terms of the test's reliability, most of Hughes' 91989) recommendations are followed. Test conditions are standardised, the administration and test method facets are controlled, instructions for examiners are extensive. Examiners are trained before accreditation. They must attend a refresher course annually and have to undergo a re-accreditation every two years. During the training sessions and the refresher courses, model scripts and interviews are marked and moderated, in an attempt to increase rater reliability.

But no testing system is without its difficulties and IELTS is no exception. The interpretation and use of the descriptors of the performance criteria remain problematic, and continue to provoke comment at the annual refresher courses. The subjectivity of the scoring system for the writing papers and for the interview is always problematic, particularly when a student's score may debar him or her from study at university. Where a student's score is borderline, it has been the unofficial policy of the examiners at the English Language Centre of the University of Tasmania to have the paper or tape assessed by two or more examiners. This may seem commonsense, but is not as yet official policy for IELTS. It may be therefore, that smaller regional centres with fewer students can achieve scores which are more reliable than in larger centres where such double marking is not possible.

Another aspect of the test which is problematic is the interview. The test must not exceed 15 – minutes and must follow five specific stages. To ensure that the test does not exceed the time limit, in the English Language Centre of the University of Tasmania, 15 minute cassette tapes are used, so that the interviewer knows exactly when the time is up. The interviewer is also the assessor. Variability in the performance of the interviewer can significantly affect performance in the test but where the interviewer is also the assessor, it can be difficult for that person to maintain his or her own performance in the interview. To date, little has been done to ensure interviewer performance is standardised, after initial training. It is my contention that the annual refresher courses for examiners should include practice in interview techniques as a mandatory aspect of such courses.

CSWE and migrant education in one regional centre

Before discussing the Certificate of Spoken and Written English and its use as a testing instrument, it is important to recall that CSWE is principally a form of achievement testing, whereas IELTS is a more general proficiency test. In addition, with the exception of the Further Study competencies at stage 4, which are sometimes used as an alternative to IELTS for entry to tertiary study, CSWE does not have the same kind of gatekeeper role as IELTS. A student's performance in the tasks for CSWE generally does not have such profound consequences on that person's future.

There are those who would argue that any problems associated with the use of CSWE, its validity and reliability are not so important precisely because of its lack of gatekeeper role. In addition, some would argue that any inadequacies in terms of validity and reliability are amply justified in terms of its beneficial backwash (or washback effect). It is true that to a large extent the tasks simulate or mirror real – life communicative acts. The tasks for CSWE can be seen to be direct tests of communicative competence and would appear to have both face validity and content validity. This has had consequences for the syllabus which some would describe as positive, in that the tasks practised are directly relevant to the second language learners. However, there is the alternative view that CSWE tends to dominate the curriculum and that it takes too little account of the individual learner's needs and interests. It should be noted too, that there is as yet little empirical evidence to support the belief that direct tests have a beneficial backwash, as McNamara points out (1996, p. 23). This hypothesis has been investigated most recently by Burrows (1998).

Like IELTS, the Certificate of Spoken and Written English is criterion referenced. But whereas IELTS has a nine band scale of performance descriptors for the tester to master, each task performed by students for CSWE has a separate (although often overlapping) list of performance criteria against which to judge the performance in each task. There are four stages of CSWE, with up to eighteen tasks at stage four and with approximately half a dozen performance criteria for each task against which to judge each student's performance. Given that research has shown that raters vary in their interpretation of the meaning of each performance criteria (see Lumley & McNamara 1995; Brindley 1998) the difficulties of ensuring rater reliability are significant. In the case of a regional centre, where classes may include students working at different stages, the difficulties are compounded.

In line with the Hughes (1989) recommendations and with the guidelines of CSWE, at the Adult Migrant English Service in Tasmania there are training materials and moderation sessions every term in an attempt to increase rater reliability. In addition, there are national moderation sessions, but it is unfortunate that the distance and one suspects, the cost, prohibit all but a very few from attending. Brindley (1998, p. 72) points out that the use of statistical tools such as Rasch analysis can be used to compensate for such factors as variations in rater performance, but cost may prohibit their extensive use.

There is a high level of conscientiousness and professionalism at AMES centres in Tasmania. Nevertheless, the increased casualisation of English language teachers, a reasonably high staff turnover, and the entry and exit of students at all stages of the program are also factors which make high rater reliability very difficult to achieve. Hughes points out that if a test is not reliable then it cannot be considered valid (1989, p. 42). Another problematic issue in relation to the validity of CSWE is sampling a sufficient number of representative tasks from any particular domain. As Skehan states, 'A large part of the problem in testing is in sampling a sufficiently wide range of language to be able to generalize to new situations...' (1991, p. 208).

Alderson (1981) gives the example of measuring the ability of the testee to perform at a cocktail party. The problem is that we are unable to know if the testee will perform in the same way at another cocktail party because the sample is too small for us to be able to predict the testee's performance at all cocktail parties. Thus without adequate sampling a test cannot have predictive validity.

CSWE has precisely this difficulty. This can be illustrated if we look at one of the writing competencies at stage III. '(The student...) can prepare relevant documents foremployment.' As part of this competency, a student may write a letter of application in response to a job advertisement. If the student writes one letter of application which meets the performance criteria, this may be a one-off event. It is an insufficiently large sample to be able to generalise to other situations and thus has no external validity. The teachers' guidelines for what to do in such cases are not clear and it is often not feasible to ensure the learner can write letters of a similar standard in different contexts.

It is important to recall Hughes' (1989) recommendation that for a test to be reliable one should not allow the student too much choice in performance task. The range statements for each task, provided with the guidelines for CSWE, often give a great degree of latitude in terms of task and it is often left to the teacher to decide which tasks are appropriate or 'relevant' for the particular student concerned. While this might appear to give the assessment greater 'face' validity, we cannot be sure that either the choice of task or the performance on that task is reliable.

Empirical research conducted by Brindley (1998) on two of the writing competencies at stage III of CSWE would appear to confirm the misgivings of teachers required to use such materials. For competency 10, results seem to indicate that in order to achieve a 'minimally acceptable dependability coefficient', four tasks and four raters would be necessary. In the case of competency 12, two tasks and two raters would ensure a more dependable result.

Model tasks to be used for testing are provided with the CSWE guidelines, though there may not be very many, or they may be entirely unsuitable for the Tasmanian context. This has meant that for several years it has been necessary for teachers to design many of their own tasks, only some of which have been properly moderated or trialled. Designing tasks can be a satisfying activity for those teachers who like to design materials, but it may be that these tasks do not always meet the necessary specifications and lack content and construct validity.

Although some empirical research has been undertaken to investigate various aspects of CSWE (Brindley, 1998, Wigglesworth forthcoming), much more research is needed to improve the quality of CSWE as an assessment instrument.

Conclusion and recommendations

Although IELTS is not a perfect assessment tool in that it reflects the shortcomings of developments in linguistic theory, the funding of research into aspects of IELTS is nonetheless commendable, in that attempts towards greater validity and reliability are being sought. Bearing in mind the important gatekeeper role of IELTS discussed earlier, it is also suggested that double marking become official policy in all cases where the students' band level is borderline. In addition, attempts to improve interviewer performance should include regular practice in interview techniques for all accredited examiners.

At the present time, CSWE generally does not have a significant gatekeeper role to the extent that IELTS does. The achievement of the certificate at each of the stages may be used to guide those who need to place students in new classes, and especially if clients move from one state to another. Should CSWE assume a more important role then it will become imperative to build in greater controls and more exacting testing conditions to increase the test reliability and therefore its validity. For the peace of mind of those teaching staff who feel uncomfortable with aspects of the use of CSWE, the following changes are recommended.

To increase the test reliability, all new staff should be trained *prior* to using CSWE. The training should be standardised and should follow the same procedure for every trainee. Both training sessions and the subsequent moderation sessions should practise the assessment of all the different competencies at each stage in a systematic way. In addition, *all* teaching staff should be given the opportunity to attend national moderation sessions at some stage, and the provision of detailed feedback from these sessions should become standard policy.

Because of the large number of competencies at each level, all of which have a significant number of performance criteria to consider, records should be kept of the sample performances studied at each moderation session. These would be a useful resource, both to ensure that moderation of all task performances has been systematically covered, and also for those staff who may wish to undertake further study of the competencies in their own time. In addition, a sufficient number of samples of the performance for each competency need to be studied. This is essential to ensure both inter – and intra-rater reliability.

From the perspective of the language learner, a minimum of two tasks and two assessors should be used for the achievement of each competency. In addition, the systematic use of portfolios to keep records of repeat performances on the different competencies would go some way towards increasing the external validity of CSWE.

There are those who believe that although there remain a significant number of problems with communicative language testing, it can be justified in terms of the beneficial backwash effect it may have on language teaching. Weir (1990, p. 13) comments: 'If our communicative tests have a beneficial backwash effect in encouraging the development of communicative capacity in the classroom, then we can be less worried about the theoretical and empirical shortcomings of our knowledge of language use.' But in so far as assessment of language performance has significant consequences for those being assessed, it remains critical to work consistently towards the elimination of those problems outlined above.

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